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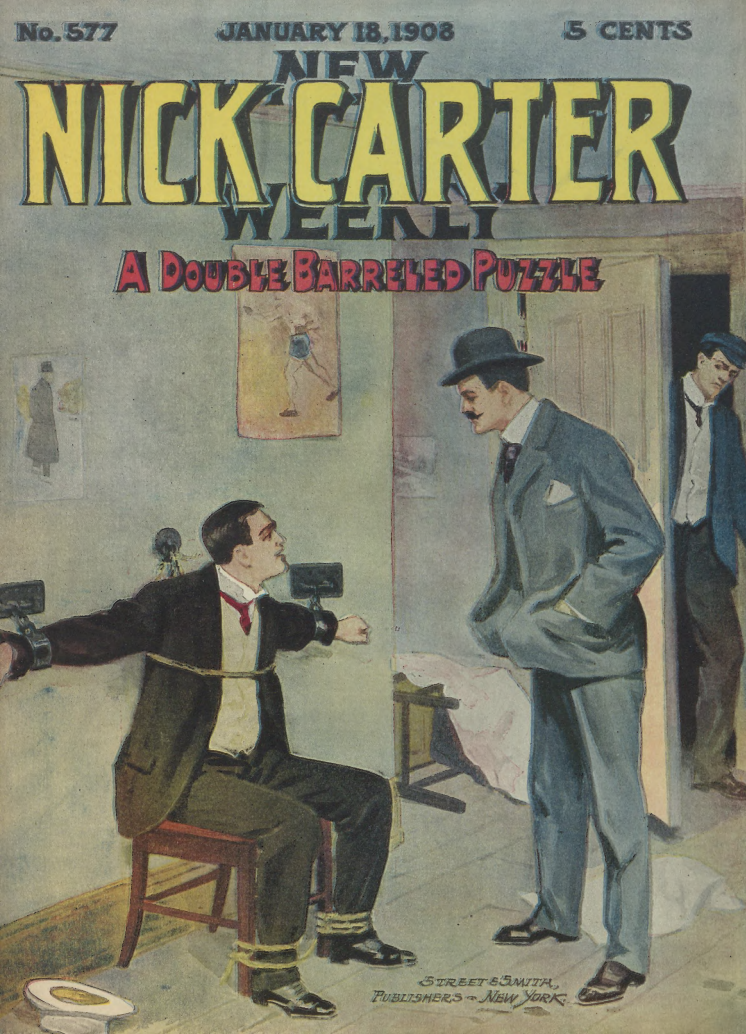
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

A DOUBLE BARRELED PUZZLE



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NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

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A DOUBLE-BARRELED PUZZLE

OR,

PATSY'S BIG CONUNDRUM.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE.

Patsy Garvan, Nick Carter's second assistant, was alone in the house, save for the presence there of Joseph the valet, and the other servants.

It was a warm, pleasant evening in September, and Patsy had taken his chair out on the front steps to enjoy his cigar the better in the open air; the darkness had only just fallen. Chick was absent from the city and was not expected to return for more than a week more, and the detective himself had gone out early in the day, leaving word for Patsy that he would return early in the evening. The second assistant was awaiting his arrival while he smoked his cigar on the front steps of the house.

Presently a messenger-boy rode up to the curb in front of the house, dismounted from his wheel, stationed it against the curbstone, and then ran up the steps and gave a crumpled bit of soiled brown paper into Patsy's outstretched hand.

Patsy was obliged to take the note inside the hallway in order to read it, and even then he found some difficulty in deciphering it, although the moment he caught its meaning, he was not long in imbibing its entire contents.

The paper on which it was written had originally served as part of a piece of wrapping-paper, and had evidently been torn hastily away to supply the purpose it now filled.

It was ragged at the edges, of no particular shape at all, was badly soiled, it had been crumpled as if wadded into a ball, and the writing upon it, although unmistakably in the hand of Nick Carter, bore evidences of haste and of extreme difficulty in writing it.

The message was short, too, and extremely unsatisfactory. It read as follows:

"Come to me at once. This boy will lead the way. I guess they have got me this time, all right, but I think I can hold out till you get to me and bring help. See Billy Studley. Wire for Chick, if you don't find me at once. I can't tell you where I am, for I don't know, but the boy who picks this up will be able to tell you where he got it. N. C."

Patsy had to read the note over twice before he thoroughly mastered its contents, and he returned then to the front steps with a jump.

"Here, boy!" he exclaimed to the messenger who brought the note. "Tell me about this."

"Tell you about it?" asked the boy, in apparent surprise. "What shall I tell you about it? If the message

don't tell you what you want to know about it, don't ask me."

"Where did you get it?"

"Down at the office."

"What office?"

"The office where I work."

"Who gave it to you?"

"The manager."

"How long ago was that?"

"Half an hour, maybe."

"Where did he get it?"

"Who? The manager?"

"Yes."

"You can search me. I suppose it was left there to be delivered. That is the way that most of 'em come in."

"But this note says that the boy who delivers it can tell me all about it."

"Well, I ain't responsible for what the note says, mister, because I didn't write it, and I don't know who did."

"Tell me how the note happened to come into your possession."

"I have just told you that."

"Tell me again. Tell me exactly how it happened."

"Well, if you are so particular, I had been out on an errand and had just returned, when Potts—he's the manager—called me to him, gave me the number of this house and the note at the same time, and he says to me, 'Deliver that note right away. Give it to whoever comes to the door. No answer.' That's all, mister. I did as I was told."

"And is that all you know about it?"

"Every bit."

"You don't even know how long the note had been in the office when it was given to you?"

"I don't know any more about it than you do."

"All right. You wait here a moment, and I will return to your office with you. By the way, from what office did you come?"

"Eighth Avenue and Twenty-third Street."

"All right; I'll be back in a moment."

Patsy hurried inside the house and called Joseph to him.

"I'm likely to be out a little time, Joseph," he said, "but you are to wait up for me if it takes all night. If I am not back here by midnight, you are to telegraph to Chick at that time to return here at once. Sign the chief's name to the message. That's all."

He found the boy awaiting him on the steps, and together they made their way as rapidly as possible to the office where the lad was employed.

Mr. Potts, the manager of that particular office, gave his immediate attention to Patsy when he learned who he was, but he had very little more information to give than the messenger.

"No, sir," he said, in reply to Patsy's first question, "I don't know anything about the note; only this: A gentleman walked swiftly into the office just a few moments before I sent the note to you by the boy who took it. He had the note in his hand, and he laid it down on the desk, right there, and a quarter of a dollar with it.

"'See that this message is delivered at Nick Carter's house at once. Here is a quarter to pay for the delivery,' he said, and before I could make any reply to him he was gone.

"I thought it rather strange, and I picked the note up and looked at it. I may as well admit that I read it, too, for I didn't understand the conduct of the gentleman who left it here. However, I could make still less of the contents, and so I gave it into the hands of one of our messengers and sent it around. And that is all that I know about it."

"You say it was a gentleman who brought it in here?" asked Patsy.

"Yes."

"What do you mean by that term?"

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose I mean merely that he was well dressed and that he looked like a gentleman."

"You did not know him?"

"No."

"And don't remember to have seen him before, so that you would recognize him if you saw him again?"

"Oh, I'd recognize him, all right, if I should see him again; but I am sure that I have never seen him before."

"He gave no name?"

"He didn't say a word of any kind other than what I have repeated to you."

"You thought he was in haste."

"He acted as if he was in a devil of a hurry; I thought his actions strange. He seemed nervous and upset about something, but before I got my wits about me sufficiently to ask a question, he was gone."

"Did you notice which way he went when he left the office?"

"I didn't even notice that. All I saw was that he went out at the door as quickly as he came in through it—and that is all."

"Describe the man to me."

"Well, as well as I can remember, he was rather tall; almost six feet, I should say. He had a mustache about the color of rye-straw; blue eyes; a little tuft of whisker grew on his under lip; his hair was beginning to turn gray over the temples, but the rest of it was brown; he was well dressed in a dark suit of clothes and a derby hat; he wore eye-glasses, was good-looking, and was, I should say, between thirty-five and forty years old. Oh, yes, he wore a diamond ring on the third finger of his right hand, and another diamond in his shirt-front. That is all I can tell you about him."

"What time did all that happen? I suppose you keep a record of such things."

"Certainly"—the manager referred to his cards, and added: "It was an hour ago, lacking five minutes."

"I wonder if anybody else here in the office saw the man?"

"I suppose we all saw him; but I don't suppose anybody took any notice of him as much as I did."

"Suppose you ask the boys who happened to be here in the room at the time. One of them might remember the man, or might have known who he was. I'll make it worth the trouble that anybody takes to help me out in this matter."

The manager was thoughtful a moment, trying to remember just who had been in the office at the time of the entrance of the stranger, and presently he called three of the messenger-boys around him, and he asked:

"Do you boys remember when the gentleman brought in the note to be delivered and left it on the desk there, with a quarter, saying that it was to be taken to Nick Carter's house?"

"I do," replied one of the lads at once, and the others presently admitted that they did also, but now, when the manager was about to ask other questions, Patsy stepped quickly forward and interrupted:

"Let me talk to him," he said, and he drew the lad aside to one corner of the room.

"You replied to that question as if there was some particular reason why you remembered the incident," he said. "Is that correct?"

"I suppose it is, sir, although it ain't much of a reason."

"No? Well, any reason will answer. What was the reason?"

"Just merely that I recognized the man when he came in; that's all."

"The best reason in the world. Now, who was the gentleman?"

"I don't know that, sir."

"But I thought you said you recognized him."

"So I did—by sight. I don't know his name; I just knew his face."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"No, sir."

"Or where he has an office?"

"No, sir."

"Then, what in the world *do* you know about him?"

"I only know that I have served him before, sir. It wasn't so long ago, either."

"Do you mean that you would not know where to search for him in order to find him again? Is that what you mean?" asked Patsy.

"Yes, sir; but I could go to the place where I saw him before and ask them there about him. They might know. I can do that if you want me to."

"I do want you to do that very thing—and to take me with you, too. And if we find the gentleman through your efforts I will pay you well for your trouble. We will go at once."

CHAPTER II.

A GENTLEMAN GAMBLER.

Permission was readily secured from the manager, and after a few moments' delay Patsy followed the boy out upon the street.

As soon as they were clear of the office the messenger stopped.

"I don't know whether I am doing just exactly right, sir," he said tentatively, "in taking you to the place where we are going, but I suppose you can fix it all right in case I do make any kind of a break; can't you?"

"I think I can," replied Patsy. "Tell me about it."

"Well, the place to which I am taking you is a gambling-house. It was there where I saw the gentleman you are trying to find, and it wasn't more than two hours before that, either."

"Do you mean that he was one of the players who was gambling in the place, or that he is one of the men who belong there?" asked Patsy.

"Oh, he was one of the players, all right. Will you let me tell you about it in my own way, sir?"

"Yes. Go ahead."

"There are only two of us who serve that gambling-house. You see, they are running against the law just now, and we have to be mighty particular. Mr. Potts don't like to trust all the boys, so he picks out two of us and always sends one of us when we get a call from that particular place."

"I see. Go on."

"Well, for the last three days there has been a steady game going on there, day and night, and I have been on duty most all of the time. I had just got my extra time off when you entered the office."

"Yes. Well?"

"This man you are seeking was one of the players. He was in the game from the start, or at least he was in it and playing hard the first time I was called around there. I did several unimportant errands for him, and he tipped me handsomely. That is how I happened to remember him so well."

"Exactly."

"I don't know whether he saw me and remembered me or not, when he came into the telegraph office with the message he left there. If he did, he made no sign of it. But I saw him and recognized him, although I said nothing about it, and would not have done so if I had not seen that you are very anxious to find him."

"I am that, indeed."

"Your anxiety to find him has nothing to do with what he did in the gambling-house, has it, sir?"

"Not at all. Nothing whatever."

"Then that is all right. If it had I couldn't take you around there. As it is, I am very much afraid they won't like it."

"I will promise you that no harm shall come to you because of it."

"All right, sir."

"Do you happen to know the gentleman's name?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"Do you think you will be admitted to the gambling-house when we get there?"

"Oh, yes. There will be no difficulty about that. They know me, all right, and that is the reason I am so particular in telling you about it. They would let me take anybody there I wanted to because they know I wouldn't give them the double-cross for anything."

"All right. When we get there, you take me inside, and tell them the truth about what we want to know."

"But, sir, the point is that you come from Nick Carter's house. At least, I suppose you do?"

"That is correct."

"And for all I know you may be Mr. Carter himself."

"I am not. The note was written by Mr. Carter. I don't know where he was when he wrote it, and it is to find out that I am so anxious."

"I see. But will you give me your word, sir, that you won't do anything against the place where I am taking you?"

"Yes. I promise."

"Then, here we are, sir. I don't suppose the game is running now, although it may be. If you will stick close beside me, sir, I'll take you in."

It was a strange experience for Patsy, to be led around and introduced into illegal places by a youth, and he smiled when he thought of it; but the next instant the lad had given the signal and a huge negro was peering out at the door upon them.

"It is all right, Julius," said the lad to the negro. "This gentleman is a friend of mine, and he is all right."

"But there ain't nothin' doin' now, Crispy," replied the negro.

"That doesn't matter. Let us in. My friend here wishes to see the dealer on a matter of important business. It's on the level, too."

The door opened then, and they entered. Inside the house, the lad, whom the negro had called Crispy, conducted Patsy to the parlor, and left him there with the injunction:

"If you will wait here a minute I will bring the dealer to you, sir."

He was gone, and he remained absent a long time; but at last he did return, followed by a clean-shaven person, with cold and calculating blue eyes and expressionless face, who bowed coldly to Patsy, and said:

"Crisp has told me what your business with me is, sir, but I am afraid that I can't help you any. However, I will be glad to do so if I can."

"Let us start perfectly fair, then," replied Patsy. "I suppose that Crisp has told you who I am?"

"Yes. He says that you come from Nick Carter's house, and if it wasn't for the fact that I like your frank method of opening proceedings I should have declined to see you at all. You understand, of course, that we haven't much use for detectives in this place. We have managed to keep under cover so far, and we wish to remain so, if it is possible."

"I can quite understand that," replied Patsy. "I will give you my personal word that no harm shall come to you from this visit. I will also make the promise in Nick Carter's name. I think you know that he is a man of his word, and that his assistants are the same."

"Yes. I believe in that. If I did not, I would not be here talking to you now."

"Thank you."

"Now, what is it that you wish me to do for you?" asked the dealer.

"I would like you to read this note first," replied Patsy, extending the note he had received that evening. "When you have done so, I will explain."

"Well?" asked the dealer, after a short pause, during which he read the note through.

"That note was brought to me this evening, at the house, by one of the messengers from the same office where Crispy is employed. He knew nothing about the note, and I accompanied him back to the office, where I discovered that the note was left there by a gentleman who also left a quarter to pay for its delivery.

"When I questioned the boys there, Crispy was the one who succeeded in placing the gentleman for me, and the result is that he has brought me here. My only interest in the gentleman in question is to ascertain where he came into possession of the note, and who gave it to him. I wish to know how it happened that *he* left it at the messenger office to be delivered, when it is apparent that the writer believed that a boy was taking it for him."

"I see that," replied the gambler calmly.

"Can you tell me where I can find the man?"

"No. I haven't any more idea about that than you have."

"Is he a frequent visitor here?"

"Yes. He comes here at least once a week and sometimes oftener. But that is all I know about him."

"You know his name, do you not?"

"I know the name that he passes under while here."

"Have you any reason to suppose it is not his true name?"

"No; only on general principles. What I mean is that I do *not* know that it *is* his right name."

"I understand you. How is he known here?"

"He is addressed as Mr. Ryan, and I have heard players who came with him call him by the name of Jasper."

"That would indicate that his full name is Jasper Ryan, wouldn't it?"

"That is the name by which I know him—yes."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"I have already assured you that I do not."

"What is his business?"

"I don't know that, either."

"Do you know that he has an office down-town, or in any part of the town?"

"I have heard him refer to his 'office,' but nothing more than that. I have never known him to say where it is located."

"Will you tell me your own name?"

"I go by the name of Sid. That is enough. Everybody calls me that."

"Well, Sid, you are a bank-dealer, and you are a good one, I take it. You are no chicken at the business, either. A man in your line can size up a man very correctly. It is part of your stock in trade to do that. Will you tell me your own personal opinion of Jasper Ryan?"

"If you will take it for what it is worth and no more, I will. But you must understand that it is only an opinion, based upon my observation. Nothing more than that."

"I understand perfectly."

"I should say, then, that Jasper Ryan is a man who is going to the dogs very fast indeed. He is not a good gambler. He is neither a good loser nor a good winner. I should say that he is a man who has always lived a quiet life until lately, and that something has occurred to drive him to the cards."

"A business man, or a professional one?"

"A business man, I should say."

"Does he drink?"

"A lot; but I have never seen it 'throw' him—yet. It will before long, however. It always throws anybody who goes up against it. At least that is my experience. A good gambler never drinks. I suppose you know that."

"Yes."

"Ryan is a gentleman. I know that. You can see it with half an eye. But it is a part of my profession never to meddle with a client's affairs, and to know as little about them as possible."

"I know."

"So, truthfully, I cannot tell you where to find the gentleman. The only suggestion that I could make would be for you to hang around here evenings until he comes here again."

"When is that event likely to occur?"

"I couldn't even guess as to that. He might come in here to-night, and he may not show up here again for two weeks. It is very uncertain."

"Would you be willing to send me word when he does come here again, on my assurance that I have told you my full reason for seeking him?"

"I would rather you wouldn't ask me to do that. I will admit you to the place at any time you wish to come, but further than that I would not care to go."

"And that is all you can do to help me?"

"That is absolutely all, sir. I am sorry, but it is all."

"I think, perhaps, I could find him for you," spoke up Crispy at that moment.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WHO SENT THE NOTE.

Patsy departed from the gambling-house but little wiser than when he entered it, for he had only a small amount of faith in the ability of the boy Crispy to find the man he sought, although Crispy himself seemed to have perfect confidence that he could do so.

They paused together on the corner of Eighth Avenue and Twenty-second Street, and Patsy asked him:

"Crispy, why do you think you can find the gentleman—Mr. Ryan?"

"Only because I believe in my luck, sir."

"That isn't a very substantial thing to go by, however."

"Possibly not; but have you ever noticed that there are some men you will constantly meet on the streets, no matter where you go? While there are others you never see at all, save by appointment?"

"There may be something in that—yes."

"Well, there is rarely a day passes that I do not see this Mr. Ryan somewhere, and——"

"Hold on, right there! You are giving me a very good clue now."

"Am I? How is that, sir?"

"You are one of the trusted messengers at your office, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose you get the cream of the service, don't you?"

"If there is any cream to be given out, and I happen to be there to take it, I get it."

"Very good. Now tell me how many times you have met this Mr. Ryan since you have known him by sight; tell me of each time you have met him, and where the encounters were."

"Well, I think I have seen him at least four times during the past week, and twice I have seen him in the corridors of the Waldorf Hotel. Once I saw him seated at a table in the café of the Holland House, and the other time I saw him in the corridor of the Imperial."

"Good! Why didn't you tell me all that before?"

"I didn't think of it. But what does that amount to, anyhow, meeting him in hotels that way?"

"It means that he is in the habit of frequenting those particular hotels, doesn't it?"

"Perhaps so."

"You see, Crispy, men are creatures of habit. They get into the habit of visiting certain places, and their day never seems quite complete until they have gone to each one of them."

"I hadn't thought of that."

"Usually a man gets to be known at the places he frequents. There is always somebody at such places who knows his name, and who has performed services for him or talked with him. That is the sort of person we must look for now."

"Me, too?"

"Sure. You know the man by sight, and I do not; for that reason I want you with me while I search for him. Of course I shall pay you well for your services."

"I am only too glad to go with you, sir."

"Come on, then. We will go to the Imperial first. From there we will drift around to the Holland and from there to the Waldorf."

The time was still early in the evening, it being not yet nine o'clock when they arrived at the Imperial; but Patsy could obtain no trace of his man there. Nobody knew him by name, and although one of the bartenders believed that he recognized the description that was furnished him, his recollection was so hazy that it amounted to nothing.

At the Holland they met with a little better success.

He was known there by name, but that was all that was known about him, save that he had not been seen about the hotel for two or three days, and it was uncertain when he might come in again.

At the Waldorf they obtained even less satisfaction than that; and after a fruitless lot of questioning, Patsy flung himself into a chair in the corridor of the great hostelry, wondering which way he would turn next.

He read the note he had received from Nick through again and again, until he knew it by rote, wondering all the time what it could mean, trying to guess what sort of difficulty his chief had fallen into and wishing with all his heart that Chick was there to consult with him.

And while he was doing that, Crispy began to wander about the corridors of the hotel, with his bright young eyes keenly alert, looking into the face of every man he passed, and never for an instant relaxing his eagerness to find the party they sought.

And he succeeded in his hopes.

Over near the Thirty-third Street entrance the boy saw the man, satchel in hand, just leaving the hotel. It was not as if he were a guest there who was just departing, but rather as if he had started somewhere, and had run in at the hotel for a moment while on his way to the train; and Crispy darted forward and seized him unceremoniously by the sleeve.

"Mr. Ryan!" he exclaimed. "Please, sir, wait a moment."

The gentleman paused in surprise, and he looked around at the boy with a startled expression in his eyes, as if the sudden calling out of that name had alarmed him.

"What the dev—— Oh, why, Crispy, you startled me! What do you want? You mustn't detain me now, for I am in a great hurry. What do you want?"

"There is a gentleman here who wishes to see you, and he has promised to pay me if I found you for him. He is——"

"Well, you tell him that he is too late to see me—that's all!" exclaimed Ryan, and his face paled again, as it had done when Crispy first called out to him.

"Oh, please, sir, see him, won't you?" insisted Crispy.

"No, I won't. I can't. I haven't time, anyhow, and I—— What does he want?"

"It is about that note you left at the messenger office to be delivered at Nick Carter's house. You remember it, don't you?"

"Oh! That! Yes, I remember it. What about it?"

"He wants to see you about it. He wants to know where you got it. He is in some trouble about it, and he has been searching everywhere for you. Won't you please see him?"

"I would, Crispy, if I had time; but I haven't. I've got to catch a train, you know. It is very important. Are you sure that that is *all* he wants to see about."

"Yes. I heard him promise Sid that."

"Sid? Who is—— Oh! Has he been there in search of me?"

"Yes. I took him there."

"Well, perhaps it is all right, but, anyhow, I haven't time to wait to see him now. You tell him that——"

"There he is now!" interrupted Crispy, with a glad cry, and he called aloud to Patsy, who strode into that corridor at the moment.

Instantly Patsy came rapidly forward, and Ryan, perceiving that there was no escaping, even had he made the effort, waited.

"Well, sir?" he said to Patsy, as the latter approached him. "Crispy was just telling me of your desire to see me, and I was explaining that I am in haste to catch a train for the West. I can spare you five minutes. What is it you want with me?"

Patsy noticed that while he asked the question, although he was outwardly suave and polite, his voice had suddenly become hard and cold, and that while he talked his right hand stole into the breast of his coat, where he undoubtedly carried some sort of a weapon, which he was prepared to make use of if he thought it necessary. Patsy wondered at this, although he scarcely gave it a second thought at the time.

"I think," said Patsy, smiling reassuringly—for he saw plainly that for some reason the gentleman needed re-

assuring—"that I can conclude the business I have with you in much less time than five minutes. I only wish to know if you are the gentleman who left this note at the Eighth Avenue and Twenty-third Street messenger office, to be delivered at the house of Nick Carter; and if you are that gentleman, if you will be kind enough to tell me when and where and in what manner you became possessed of it. That is all, sir."

"Indeed!" The man was evidently greatly relieved. He withdrew that suggestive hand from the breast of his coat; his color returned to his face, and he smiled upon Patsy.

"Yes," he said at once, "I left it there to be sent to Nick Carter's house, although I had no idea where that house was located, nor who Nick Carter might be."

"What!" exclaimed Crispy. "You don't know who Nick Carter is? Why he is——"

Patsy gripped his arm and silenced him. Then he replied:

"Mr. Carter is my very dear friend, Mr. Ryan—I believe that is your name?"

"Well, sir?"

"The note—did you read it?"

"No. I had and have no idea of the contents."

"Will you read it? You will understand then why I am so anxious about it."

"Never mind that part of it. It does not interest me. Tell me how I can serve you. I am in great haste."

"Where did you get the note, Mr. Ryan?"

"I got it from a boy—a mere lad, not more than twelve or thirteen years old, I should say," was the reply.

"Under what circumstances did you receive it?"

"The circumstances were rather peculiar, sir. The boy was knocked down by a passing automobile on Eighth Avenue, between Twenty-second and Twenty-third Streets. I was passing at the moment, and the lad was flung almost at my feet. I was the first to reach him. I helped to carry him to a drug-store, and in the meantime somebody—an officer, I suppose—had put in an ambulance-call. The car that had knocked the boy over sped onward and disappeared, so I was told."

"But about the note—how did you become possessed of that?"

"The boy was holding it in his hand when he was knocked down. He was clutching it tightly when I picked him up. He hung on to it so tenaciously that just before he lost consciousness entirely I asked him what it was."

"Well, sir?"

"The little fellow's eyes brightened for an instant, and he replied, so that I could barely hear him:

"'It's got to go to Nick Carter's house right away, and now I can't take it. I promised, too.'

"'I will send it there for you if you will tell me where it is,' I told him, and he seemed greatly relieved as he replied:

"'Any policeman can tell you where the house is, and——' And that was all he said, for a spasm of pain came over him and he lapsed into unconsciousness. The ambulance arrived a moment later, and after it had taken the boy away, I found myself with the note still in my hand. I asked a passer-by where there was a messenger office near, and was directed to the one where this lad evidently works, so I went in there, left the note with twenty-five cents for delivery, and said that I wanted it sent to Nick Carter's house, using the words the boy had used to me. The manager at the office seemed to know where to send it, so I hastened out of the place and have not thought of it since."

"And that is all you can tell me about it, sir?"

"Absolutely all. Yes."

"Did you notice to what hospital the boy was taken?"

"I did not, but I should think that could be easily ascertained."

"Yes. I am very greatly obliged to you, sir."

"Not at all; not at all. I am only too glad to have been able to serve you. And now, if you will excuse me, I really must leave you. If you are in trouble over that note, I wish you well out of it, sir."

"Thank you," said Patsy, and he stood for several minutes after Ryan had gone, looking after him.

CHAPTER IV.

WHO IS BILLY STUDLEY?

"There goes a mystery—and a history as well," was the mental comment that Patsy made as the form of the man who called himself Jasper Ryan disappeared through the doorway of the Waldorf. "If I were asked to make a guess concerning that gentleman, I should not hesitate to express it as my opinion that he is making a 'getaway' at the present moment, and that the bag he carries so carelessly contains all the cash and funds he has been able to scrape together for his flight. But it is no concern of mine.

"He is a nervy individual, too, and every inch a gentleman, as Sid, the dealer, said he was.

"I suppose it is another instance of a good man gone wrong; but it doesn't concern me, and I'm not going to be the one to put a block in his path for him to trip over. All the same, I'd like to know who he really is."

Five minutes later he had called up police headquarters over the telephone, had been put in communication with the station-house of the precinct where the accident to the boy had occurred, and had obtained the information he desired, relative to the hospital to which the lad was taken.

He lost no time then in getting to the hospital, and as

before, Crispy accompanied him; but here again he ran up against a snag in his investigation, as we shall see.

When he applied at the office of the hospital he told them that he did not know the name of the patient he sought, but he described the incident that had sent the boy there, and told the time of it, and the doctor who waited upon him, after making inquiries, said, with a sad smile:

"I am afraid, sir, that I have bad news for you. The boy you have described to me died two hours after he was brought here, and without regaining consciousness. There was nothing upon his person to identify him, and I doubt very much if he had a home at all. He was doubtless a homeless waif of the city. At least we have entered him so on the books."

"Will you tell me what was found in his possession?" asked Patsy.

"Strangely enough he had a ten-dollar gold piece he had either stolen or found somewhere. There was also a jack-knife, a few trinkets such as a boy of his age would carry, and the most remarkable collection of buttons——"

"Eh? What's that?" asked Patsy, interested at once. "Did you say a collection of buttons, doctor?"

"Yes; and——"

"Did he have buttons sewed all over his clothing, in places where they could not be of use, save for ornament?"

"He did, yes. It would seem that you know him, after all, Mr. Garvan."

"No; but I have heard of such a boy. He was called 'Buttons,' if it is the same one I am thinking of. I think, too, that I know where he received the gold piece. It must have been wrapped in a piece of paper—a note that he was asked to carry and deliver, and which he was endeavoring to carry to its destination when he was struck down. Poor little chap!"

"Then you do know something about him, eh?"

"No. All that I know about him is that there was such a lad, called Buttons, who was known about the city for his peculiarity. He was supposed to be a little strange in his mind. The point is that he was performing an act of kindness for Nick Carter when he was hurt, so that he died. It was Nick Carter who gave him the ten-dollar gold piece, I haven't a doubt."

"Will you make an effort to find out who he was, so that his relatives can claim the body, Mr. Garvan?"

"I doubt if he had any relatives at all; at least, any who would undertake the expense of his burial. No, I will do better than that. I will engage an undertaker to take charge of the poor lad and bury him in a lot in a cemetery. I am much obliged to you, doctor. I will send for the body in the morning."

It was past midnight now, and there was nothing for Patsy to do but to return home, which he did, after bidding Crispy good night.

Concerning the whereabouts of Nick Carter, he was entirely at sea. Of the reasons the detective might have had for writing that strange note, he knew absolutely nothing, and it seemed as if Fate had arranged that he should be at fault at every point in his search.

The only person who really knew from whence the note had come was dead, and it was only by a lucky chance that the message had ever been delivered at all—the chance that Jasper Ryan had been at hand to assist the boy Buttons, when he was stricken down.

It was one o'clock in the morning when Patsy arrived at the house, and Joseph was awaiting him as he had been ordered to do.

"Well, Joseph," said Patsy, as he threw his tired body into a chair, and lighted a cigar, "what has happened here since I went out?"

"Nothing has happened, sir; nothing at all."

"The chief has not returned, of course?"

"No, sir."

"Did you send the wire to Chick, as I told you to do?"

"Yes, sir; at one minute past twelve."

"Has there been a reply?"

"No, sir. The message hardly called for a reply."

"That is true enough. Nobody has called?"

"No, sir."

"Nothing doing, eh, of any description?"

"Nothing at all."

"I'm going to bed, Joseph; but I wish to be called at five o'clock, even if you have to sit up till then to do it."

"Very good, sir."

But before he left his chair to go to his room he drew the note out again and read it once again—and before he had finished the reading he leaped to his feet with an exclamation of rage at himself.

"Fool! Dolt that I am!" he exclaimed. "I wonder how in the world I permitted that one particular portion of Nick's letter to escape me so entirely. *'See Billy Studley!'* He says that plain enough, in all conscience, and here I have been trotting all over the city to-night with never a thought of the one request that the chief made in his note. See Billy Studley? Of course I'll see Billy Studley, no matter where he is. I'll wake him up out of his bed to see him. Only—*who in blazes is Billy Studley?*

"To my knowledge, I never so much as heard of the man," he mutttered, as he stood there, staring at his own reflection in the mirror over the mantel. "But Nick seemed to think that I knew who he was when he wrote that note—or he intended that I should find out mighty quick.

"Who is Billy Studley, and where shall I find out who and what and where he is, at this time of the night? I wonder if headquarters would know? Joseph!"

"Yes, sir," came the reply from the hallway.

"I have changed my mind about going to bed. You can do that yourself, as soon as you can do so. I am going out again. I shall not need you again to-night."

"Yes, sir."

He hurried to the study and seated himself at the telephone, and presently he was in communication with police headquarters.

"Hello, there!" he exclaimed. "This is Nick Carter's house. Patsy is talking. Who is at that end of the wire?"

"Petrosini," came the reply.

"Sure. I might have known that by your voice, old man, if I wasn't so flabbergasted just at the present moment. I wonder if you can give me a little information that I want very badly?"

"Possibly. I'll try. What is it?"

"Who is Billy Studley?"

"Eh? What's that? Did I hear you correctly?"

"I don't know whether you did or not. I asked you, who is Billy Studley?"

"Don't you know, Patsy?"

"If I did I wouldn't be asking you, old man."

"Your chief knows, all right."

"Well, he doesn't happen to be here at the present moment, and I want the information mighty quick, if you happen to have it at hand."

"Well," came the slow and deliberate answer, "Billy Studley happens to be a man who is very badly wanted down here at this office at the present moment."

"Wanted? Down there, at headquarters? Say, Petro, are you going to be there, where you are, for another half hour?"

"Yes."

"Will you wait there till I come? I'll start at once."

"Yes."

"Don't fail me now. If you do, I'll be tempted to shoot you. Everything has gone wrong with me to-night, and now—well, just wait till I get there. I want to be where I can *see* you talk, as well as hear you."

And Patsy was not long in getting to police headquarters, either, where he found the famous Italian detective awaiting him, and as soon as he entered the room he exclaimed:

"Now, for goodness' sake, tell me, who is Billy Studley?"

"What's the row, Patsy? What's bothering you, and why are you so dead anxious about Billy Studley all at once? What has happened to interest you in him?"

"One, two, three, four—that's exactly four questions you have asked me instead of answering the one question I have asked you four separate times."

"All the same I want an answer before I give you one. What has happened to make you interested in Billy Studley?"

"This." Patsy extended Nick's note across the space between them. "Read it through; then I'll tell you all about it."

Petrosini did read the note through with deep interest. At the conclusion he said:

"That is a strange note for Nick Carter to write to you. He must have been in trouble when he wrote it. Tell me the rest, Patsy, before I proceed with your question."

"Well, the note came to me by a regular messenger who knew nothing about it. I have been all night long tracing it out, and only to find at the end that the boy who received the message from my chief, with a ten-dollar gold piece to deliver it, was killed by an automobile on Eighth Avenue——"

"Was it Buttons?" interrupted the Italian.

"Yes."

"Did you find him in time to ask——"

"No. He had been dead hours when I found him."

"It is too bad. He could have put you wise to this business, I think. But it is too late to talk about that now. I suppose the note was taken from Buttons after he was hurt, and sent on to you, eh?"

"Yes. A gentleman who happened to be near found the note and sent it on to me. That is the way I traced it back to Buttons."

"Poor little Buttons. I only heard of his accident an hour or so ago. One of the men who knew that I was interested in the lad telephoned the information to me. Well, Patsy, we'll have to find some of Buttons' friends. It is possible that one of them may know something about this affair, but I hardly think so."

"Say, Petrosini, will you do me a great favor, without more delay?"

"Yes. I suppose you wish to know now who Billy Studley is, eh?"

"I do, for certain, who is Billy Studley?"

"Billy Studley, my dear fellow, happens to be a man who has mysteriously disappeared within the last few hours," replied the Italian, with a smile, "so I am afraid you are up against it again."

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN WHO MADE THE GETAWAY.

Patsy looked at the Italian detective as if he could not believe his own powers of hearing. It was incredible that he should have such luck as this all the time; and now to be told that the man he had been told to seek, and whom he had neglected to search for, had disappeared, seemed too hard luck altogether.

"Disappeared?" he murmured, after a moment. "Disappeared? Is that what you meant when you told me over the phone that he was wanted down here? Has he been reported missing—or what is the answer, anyhow?"

"The answer is that Studley is a defaulter, and that he has made off with the goods. We are looking for him, but he is not to be found around any of his old haunts at all."

"Defaulter?" repeated Patsy, vaguely stirred by a recollection of something which did not explain itself fully to him at the moment. "Then I wonder what Nick meant by sending me to *him!*"

"The probability is that Nick Carter knew nothing about it at the time he wrote that name in the message you received."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes; or he would have said more—or less."

"I guess that's right, too. But why should Nick have used the name at all in his message to me?"

"That's the very riddle I am trying to solve at the present moment, Patsy."

"You think that Nick must have known nothing about the defaulting business at the time he wrote that note?"

"That is my opinion."

"Then it would follow, wouldn't it, that Studley knew something about Nick's movements before he got into his present trouble, whatever it may happen to be?"

"I think so."

"But if Studley is a defaulter, and the police and therefore all the world knows about it, I don't see why——"

"All the world and the police know nothing about it. At present only three men, not counting yourself and the officials of the institution he robbed, know anything about it at all. That is why I was so surprised when you asked me, who is Billy Studley?"

"I see—I see. How much did he get away with?"

"Something like six hundred thousand."

Patsy whistled his astonishment.

"Well," he said, "he took enough to make it worth while. Has he got it all with him?"

"We don't know exactly how much he has with him, but we figure that he must have four or five hundred thousand of it in his satchel, all right."

"In his satchel." Again that vague recollection of something intangible disturbed Patsy. "What did he do with the rest of it?" he asked aloud.

"Lost it, doubtless, over the gaming-table. That is what he has been doing of late. I have already traced him to two of the places where he played, and there was probably another one. He passed at most of them under the name of Ryan. Jasper Ryan, I think he called himself."

"*Wh-a-a-a-t!*" exclaimed Patsy. "Say, Petrosini, if I'll stand up and turn my back and ask you to kick me, will you do it—not too hard?"

Petrosini laughed aloud.

"What is the matter now?" he asked.

"The matter is that I have seen and talked with Billy Studley this very night, within—let me think—two hours, or two and a half at the most. I talked to him about Nick Carter, too, and about that letter you hold in your hand now, and I even asked him to read it, which he refused to do on the plea that he didn't have time."

"I don't think he did have very much time."

"And he had the gall to tell me that he didn't know who Nick Carter was and had no idea where he lived."

"He is a cool proposition all around. But are you sure about what you say?"

"As sure as that I am sitting here facing you and confessing what an unmitigated ass I have been all around."

"Hold on, Patsy! It is not as bad as that. But tell me about it."

"Why, he is the chap who took the note from Buttons and left it at the A. D. office to be delivered. That is how I traced him. I traced him first to a gambling-house in——" Patsy halted suddenly in his speech, recalling the promise he had made to Sid, the gambler.

"What gambling-house?" asked Petrosini.

"I'll tell you that, old man, only on condition that you will respect a promise I made to the dealer there. I gave him my word that for the information he would give me about Mr. Jasper Ryan, he should not get into trouble."

"Well, I'll stand for it. Where was it?"

Patsy then related the entire incident, just as we already know about it, and incidentally he gave a description of the man he had talked with, and told of the impression that had been made upon him at the time.

"That was Studley, all right," said the Italian detective. "He had taken the alarm and was making his getaway when you saw him."

"That is what I supposed at the time, but I didn't know anything about it, and there you are. I argued it was no concern of mine, and I watched him go as calmly as you please. Thunder! I wish I had known that he was Studley then."

"I wish you had. You might have detained him."

"Rather. But, say, how in the world do you suppose he is mixed up with this affair of the chief's? That is what I can't make out."

"Nor I."

"You say that nobody but those you have mentioned knows about the robbery?"

"Nobody. I am sure of that."

"Then Nick could not have known about it."

"I am as positive that he did *not* know about it when he wrote that note as if he had told me as much himself."

"Then—confound it, help me out, won't you?"

"How can I, Patsy? The thing is as great a mystery to me as to you. The only light that I can throw on the subject at all is that I happen to know that Nick and Studley were once fairly warm friends. But I also know that they have seen next to nothing of each other in years."

"I have never even heard Studley's name mentioned by my chief."

"That is Nick's way, you know, Pat. When he doesn't like a man, or wants to forget him, he never mentions him at all."

"Then why should he have mentioned it in that note?"

"You are harking back now to the original question."

"I know it. That is the one I want answered."

"Well, I can't answer it."

"Do you happen to know why they fell out?"

"No; only now, since the events of this night, I fancy that Nick in some way must have got on to some crooked work of Studley's, and dropped him like a hot potato. That is what Nick would do, you know, unless he could convince him of the error of his ways."

"I know it. But why, if all that is true, did he mention the name in his note to me, and again, why did he tell me to go and see him? It's too deep a puzzle for me, Petro. Maybe you can help me to think up some way to find Nick, eh?"

"I wish I could. The only thing that I can suggest is to follow the back track of little Buttons, during the early part of the evening."

"I wonder if it could be done?"

"It could be tried; but not till daylight. Now, do you mind going back again to Studley for a moment?"

"No."

"Tell me again how he looked, what he said and did, and what your own opinion of him was at the time. Tell me so that your opinion will assist me, if you can."

"Well, he looked as if he had just stepped out of a bandbox when I first saw him. He is a handsome fellow, and as well-dressed a man as I ever saw."

"He was always that."

"Young Crispy was talking to him when I happened into the corridor where they were standing, on the Waldorf side of the big hotel."

"Yes."

"I heard Crispy say that I was coming, and instantly Studley flashed pale as a ghost, but it was only for an instant, for he turned to face me as cool as a cucumber."

"I can almost see him do that. If you had tried to arrest him then he would have killed you, or he would have shot himself; one or the other."

"That was exactly the way I sized him up, then."

"What else?"

"All the while I talked to him, until he became perfectly satisfied that I wasn't after him, he kept his right hand in his breast pocket, ready to shoot if he had need to do so. I understood perfectly well that such was his attitude, but I was hot after the information I wanted, and I let it go at that."

"Well?"

"As soon as he knew I wasn't after him he smiled, and was perfectly at ease again. My idea then was that he had perfectly calculated the time he would have to get away from whatever he had done, and from those who would be after him."

"I think he had doubtless done so—to a minute almost."

"When he went out of the door I watched him, wondering what he had done. I think I said to myself that he had the goods in that satchel, and probably he did."

"There isn't the slightest doubt of that. What else did you think? That is what I am waiting to hear."

"Well, he had endeavored to give me the impression that he was going out of town on a train for the West, and that very fact made me think that it was a steamer he wished to catch instead of a train."

"I think you were right about that, too."

"I'll tell you in a nutshell what my whole impression of him was at that moment."

"I wish you would."

"I sized him up as about the coolest proposition I had ever met. I figured that he was making a getaway of some kind, and that he would make good on it, too; and I would have offered odds right then and there that he wouldn't be caught—at least for a long time."

"What odds are you offering now, Patsy, on that same proposition?"

"I'm not offering any, if anybody should ask you."

"Why?"

"Well, one reason is that you're after him, and the other reason is that I'm after him, too. If you don't get him, I will, and if I don't get him, you will. Let's go

back up to the hotel together and see if we can smell out his track."

"I'm afraid there will be very little chance of that."

"So am I. But there may be one lying around at this time of night that couldn't be found in the morning. I mean in the shape of night-hawk hackmen, or something of that sort. It is worth trying, anyhow, don't you think so?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then."

CHAPTER VI.

PATSY'S RUN OF LUCK.

There isn't much doing even around so popular a resort as the Waldorf at half-past two o'clock in the morning, and when the two detectives arrived there they found the locality as deserted as Wall Street on Sunday.

It isn't much of a place, either, for the night-hawks to congregate, and it required only a few questions to elicit the fact that if Studley had taken a hack away from the hotel the man who took him had either disappeared for the balance of the night or else he had forgotten the incident.

Then Patsy happened to recall the fact that when Studley left the entrance to the hotel he had turned toward Sixth Avenue, and when he disappeared from the young assistant's view, which was within a few feet of the door, he was already walking rapidly.

"It's a cinch that he went across to Sixth Avenue, or at any rate, as far as Broadway," he told Petrosini. "You can moon around here for a while longer, if you like, or take any course you think best, but as for me, I'm going over Sixth Avenue way and see what I can pick up."

"All right, Patsy. Come down to headquarters in the morning, will you?"

"Yes. What time will you be there?"

"Any time after ten. I won't be there before ten to-morrow."

"All right."

There are always night-hawk hackmen around the little space at Thirty-third Street and Broadway and Sixth Avenue, and Patsy interviewed these industriously, one by one, but without obtaining anything in the way of information.

After a little he strolled down the avenue as far as Thirtieth Street, where there are usually others, near the old Haymarket Theater, but here he met with the same ill success, and the hands of the clock on the Dime Savings-bank building pointed at three when he came back to that corner, rather disgusted with his lack of success.

"I'll try the elevated," he told himself, and he ascended the stairs to the ticket-office.

The ticket-agent told him that it would be ten minutes before the arrival of another train going down-town, and so Patsy engaged him in conversation.

"I suppose you see so many pass through here that you never recall a face that you have seen once, do you?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. I do if there is anything about the face to attract my particular attention."

"A beautiful woman, perhaps," laughed the young detective.

"Well, I see a great many of them, one time and another."

"I am searching for a man whom I have reason to think took a train down-town to-night," continued Patsy. "I wonder if you could recognize him if I should describe him to you."

"It is extremely doubtful. Sometimes I don't even raise my eyes when a person passes through. There are loads of times when I could not tell you whether the person was a man or a woman, or was black or white."

"I suppose not."

"What time did this man you are looking for go down-town?" asked the agent.

"I don't know exactly, but I should think it was about ten o'clock, or a few minutes after that."

"We have a good many passengers about that hour of the night."

"Yes. I know you do; but I think you would remember this man if you had seen him; that is, if you looked up at all while he was purchasing his ticket."

"Suppose you describe him to me, then."

Patsy did so, using great care, and he drew the picture so well that the agent became instantly interested, and after a little he burst out laughing.

"That's funny!" he said at last when Patsy had finished.

"What is funny?" asked the young detective.

"Why, you have perfectly described a man whom I know very well indeed. I couldn't have described him half so well myself if I had tried. Only he hasn't passed through here to-night, and is not therefore the man you are looking for. But all the same, you have described the

man I know. And, what is more, I have seen him to-night; but not on this station."

"What is the man's name whom I have so perfectly described?"

"Studley. William Studley."

Patsy had great difficulty in concealing his surprise; but he managed to reply casually:

"I have often heard that every man in the world has his double. Possibly that is what has happened here. Or it may be possible that you saw the man I am seeking and mistook him for Mr. Studley."

"No. I know that isn't so."

"How do you know it?"

"Because I spoke to him and he replied to me. I asked him how he was, and he said he was very well indeed, and asked how I was."

"But I thought you said he did not pass through this station?"

"He didn't."

"Oh! You saw him before you came on duty?"

"No, I didn't. I had occasion to step outside upon the station platform for a moment, and I saw Mr. Studley across the tracks on the platform of the up-town station."

"Oh, that was it. Well, the next time you see him, you tell him for me that you have heard of another man who looks exactly like him."

"I will."

"Did you call him by name when you spoke to him, so that there isn't any possibility of a mistake?"

"Sure I did. And he called me by name, too."

"That settles it, then. I suppose he was on his way home, eh?"

"No. He doesn't live up that way at all. That was what made me ask him where in the world he was going."

"I don't suppose he liked that. Men don't sometimes always like to be asked such questions at that time of night. Did he tell you?"

"No; he pretended not to hear. But I'll find out, just for a joke, for I knew he heard me, and he might have answered, I think. But he has always been a little offish since he has had so much money."

"How will you find out?"

"By asking the guard of the car he boarded. I happen to know him. He is Boston Wheeler, an old chum of mine."

"Boston Wheeler, eh? That's an odd name. I suppose he will be off duty by this time?"

"No. He's on now. It is his train that is due now, I think, or the next one down. We sort of keep tabs on each other. It gives us something to think of here in this dull place. I have nothing to do but sell tickets and make change, and he has nothing to do but call out stations and sass the passengers. There is your train now, mister."

Patsy boarded it as soon as it drew in at the station, determined to discover if Boston Wheeler was on that train, and if he was not, to leave it at the next station, and wait for the next, and to continue that method of search until he found that particular guard.

But it was not Wheeler's train, nor was the next one, nor the one after that; but on the third train, which he boarded at Fourteenth Street, he found him at last; found him, too, at the very gate where he boarded the train, and he began his salutation as he had done in each instance before.

"Hello, Boston Wheeler?" he exclaimed.

"Hello yourself," was the surprised reply. "I don't happen to know you, do I?"

"No; but I know you, as you see. The ticket-agent at the down-town side of Thirty-third pointed you out to me to-night."

"Oh, he did, eh? How was that?"

"Maybe you'll recall the incident. He called across the tracks to a friend of his who was standing on the up-town platform just before your train pulled in there, about ten of the clock. Remember it?"

"Oh, yes; I do now."

"A tall, fine-looking chap, with a mustache and a tuft of hair on his under lip. Dressed in the latest, and all that. Diamond on his finger and in his shirt. Derby hat, and so forth. Your friend the ticket-agent is dead sore about it. Have I described the man?"

"To a dot."

"Did you happen to know where he got off the train, Wheeler?"

"Say, my friend," replied the guard, speaking deliberately, "you're a slick one, all right, but so am I. I'm onto your lay, too. All that guff you was giving me about my friend the ticket-agent is good goods, and true, but you've got another reason behind it. You are looking for that gazabo, ain't you?"

"I am, yes. And if you can help me find him, it will be worth your while."

"How much worth my while, mister?"

"If you can lead me to him or tell me where I can find him, it will increase your capital by fifty dollars the moment I know that you are making no mistake."

"That's very nicely said—but it ain't enough."

"No?"

"No. You want him bad, or you don't care a hang about it. One or the other. I'll do the job for a hundred."

"Can you deliver the goods?"

"I can."

"Do you mean that you know where that man can be found—now?"

"That's what I said."

"The hundred is yours as soon as you make good; and I'll put another hundred with it if you can leave your car within the next hour, and do it. How is that?"

"That sounds very good, indeed. But what assurance have I that you will pay when the goods are delivered?"

"Answer me a question first. Can you get off your car within the hour?"

"I can get off as soon as we get to the South Ferry station."

"And will you do it?"

"I will if I know that I'm going to get that dough."

"Very well, then. I will deposit the two hundred with the ticket-agent at South Ferry, and give him directions that you are to receive it from him when you and I return there together after the work is done. Is that a go?"

"You're on, mister. Now, I'd like to know who you are?"

"That isn't necessary, is it?"

"I won't work unless I know."

"My name is Garvan. Patrick Garvan. Is that sufficient?"

"Yes."

"Now, where have we got to go to get our man?"

"We've got to return up this road to the end of it. And then we've got to go farther yet. Or, if you happen to have an automobile, it will save us a lot of trouble and get us there a trifle quicker than the other way."

"I can find one, I think."

"Then that will be the thing to do."

"Do you mind telling me how it happens that you know so much about that particular man?"

"Yes, I do mind telling you. You'll find out soon enough without me putting you wise to what he is doing. But I've got it in for him, anyhow."

"Do you know his name?"

"Of course I know it."

"Tell me what it is, so that we'll be sure there is no mistake."

"It's Ryan. His full name is Jasper Ryan."

"Right you are, Wheeler. That is the man I want, and you can't take me to him any too quickly."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WOMAN ON THE FLOOR.

It seemed like a remarkable chain of events that had happened ever since, early in the evening, he had started out to fulfil the request made in the note he received from his beloved chief.

There is no denying that the element of luck entered largely into his experiences, and yet it is only fair to assert that it was luck aided and abetted by ability and direction from Patsy's own brain.

It was luck that the ticket-agent at the down-town Thirty-third Street station of the elevated road should have known Billy Studley by sight and name; it was luck that the guard on the train should also have had some acquaintance with him under his nom de guerre, but it was logical foresight and the effect of practical deduction on the part of Patsy that he was able to search out and discover both those men, and get from them what they knew of the case.

Concerning the peculations of Studley, Patsy had no interest whatever. He was not "on" that particular case. Petrosini had not thought it necessary even to relate the particulars of it.

All that Patsy wanted of Studley—or Ryan, as he seemed to prefer to be called under the present circumstances—was to ask him the meaning of that reference to his name in the strange note that had been written by Nick Carter, and which had been delivered in such a remarkable manner.

It was evident to the young detective that Studley had been living a double life for a considerable time, and that in his masquerade as Ryan he had done something to offend this guard who was known as Boston Wheeler.

But with that, also, Patsy felt that he had nothing to do.

His great anxiety was to see and to talk with Studley again; further than that, he was determined to permit

events to shape themselves, and he had already decided that he would not let Studley know how familiar he was with his doings, unless circumstances should call out the statement from him.

When they arrived at South Ferry Patsy did exactly as he had agreed to do in regard to leaving the deposit of cash there, to be collected when it was earned, and that attended to he telephoned to the garage for the automobile to get started at once and to meet them at the One Hundred and Thirty-seventh Street station of the subway, for he had in the meantime talked further with Wheeler and had decided that that was the best place to start from with the car.

He wondered, as they boarded the subway train together, what new thing could arise in his experiences of the night, to keep him off the trail and to interfere with the success of his plans.

On the way up-town, he found Wheeler strangely reticent—it was as if he already repented what he had done, and if he had it to do over again he would hesitate to sell his information at any price.

Presently he said to him:

"You haven't given me the full information about where we are to go as yet, my friend."

"No," was the somewhat surly reply, "and I ain't likely to do so, either, until the proper moment comes. It will be time enough for you to know about it when we get there."

"One doesn't like going ahead in the dark, however," suggested the young detective.

"One doesn't have to do it if one doesn't want to," answered Wheeler. "You can back out of your bargain right here and now if you want to."

"What's the matter with you? Don't you want to earn that two hundred?"

"I want the two hundred, all right. I need it. But if I didn't I'd see you——"

"Never mind about that. You have made an agreement, and I expect you to stand to it."

"Oh, I'll stand to it all right. You needn't worry about that part of it. But all the same, I'd feel a heap better if I hadn't made it."

Patsy was silent for a long time after that. He felt that it was best to leave Boston Wheeler alone with his thoughts, at least until he had directed the expedition so far that it would be impossible for him to turn back.

He realized that in his present mood the guard would give no further information about the man he knew as Ryan.

At One Hundred and Thirty-seventh Street they left the subway train together in silence, and mounting to the street above found Danny, Nick Carter's chauffeur, awaiting them with the car.

"Here is our bubble," said Patsy, with a laugh. "Now, I think it is time for you to tell us which way we are to drive from here."

"Do you? Well, I ain't telling nothing until I get good and ready—see? My contract with you says that I have got to put you next to Jasper Ryan, so's you can talk to him, within a reasonably short time. I'm going to do that very thing now, within the next hour—or maybe half an hour. That's all."

"But how can I tell the chauffeur where to go unless you direct me?" expostulated Patsy.

"You don't have to tell him. I'll sit in the front seat beside him and tell him myself, as we go along. You can have the tonneau all to yourself—see?"

Patsy "saw," and said nothing more; but he climbed into the car and directed Danny to go wherever the gentleman beside him told him to steer.

The first gray of dawn was in the heavens when they embarked in the automobile, and it became steadily lighter as they proceeded.

Still, it was yet very early in the morning, and few people were astir in that part of the city. Only milkmen and market-wagons were about, with here and there a weary individual who had not been to bed at all.

It is not necessarily a part of this story that we should give details of that rapid dash through the upper part of the city in the early morning; but presently, after a ride of nearly half an hour, the big car was turned into a cross-street, where there was only a single house along the entire block—and that house, an old-fashioned frame one, stood almost in the middle of the block and was surrounded by a high picket fence.

Here, in front of that house, by the guard's direction, the car came to a stop, and they got down, leaving Danny in charge of the machine.

"Wait here, Danny," said Patsy. "If I should want you, I will call. Otherwise you need not leave your seat. Don't stop the engine, however, for we may wish to leave here at a moment's notice."

"All right, sir," replied Danny.

Wheeler, silent and taciturn, led the way through the gateway and along the flagged walk toward the house.

where they were flanked on either hand by high rose-bushes which had long since ceased to blossom.

A high stoop stretched across the front of the house, and this Wheeler mounted with noisy steps, which jarred upon Patsy, for he would have made the approach silently if he had had his own way about it.

Suddenly Wheeler paused and uttered a loud oath, and the reason for it was obvious, even to Patsy.

The front door of the house was not closed.

That is, it was not latched; but it had been so nearly closed that they were not aware of the fact that it was unlatched until they were directly in front of it.

"What does that mean?" demanded the young detective. "Has our bird flown?"

The guard's reply was another oath, and he dashed inside the house, slamming the door open before him with a noise that might have been heard a block away.

Patsy followed him, for the man turned neither to the right nor left, but dashed at once up the stairs to the second floor, and hence through the hall and into the second-floor front room of the building.

There, just across the threshold, he stopped dead still and stared.

The room was in utter confusion. It looked as if a high wind had sported with the contents of it.

Clothing, chairs, ornaments from the tables and the mantel, the impedimenta from the bureau, and, in fact, everything that was movable in that room had been somehow dragged to the floor in hopeless confusion.

Many of these articles were broken, or smashed. Some of them had been ruthlessly trodden upon by heavy feet. A scene of more complete wreck and ruin Patsy had never seen in his life.

But that was not all.

There was a human occupant of that room, or rather one that had been human at some time, but was now past all human aid, apparently.

A woman, fully dressed, even to hat and jacket, was lying upon her face across the floor under the overturned center-table, while beside her was the leg of one of the chairs with which she had been ruthlessly struck down.

The blow had struck her across the side of the head, just above her temple, and had evidently fractured her skull, killing her, or at least knocking her senseless, instantly.

The bed in the room, which was torn and trampled as if some person had fled across it, had not been opened for sleeping-purposes. It was strewn with fragments of glass and china, made from the wreck of things that had been hurled by some one during the struggle that had taken place there.

All these conditions that have been described Patsy took in at a glance; but his attention was mostly engaged by the strange conduct of the man who had brought him there.

Boston Wheeler, when he dashed into the room, acted as if he already knew what had happened there. Not as if he had known it before his arrival at the house, but as if the sight of the open door and the other evidences of hasty departure on the part of some person had warned him of what he would find in that room up-stairs.

When he dashed into the room he came to a pause directly beside the prostrate body of the woman, and he stood there looking down upon her, motionless, for a long time, while Patsy waited breathlessly for him to move or speak again.

After a little he leaned forward and touched the woman with tentative fingers.

Then he uttered a cry, and Patsy was startled, too, for the woman moved, as if she still lived.

He would have leaped forward to her aid only that the guard forestalled him.

Instantly he grasped her and turned her over on her back, and they both saw that she was still breathing, although consciousness had not returned to her; and it was doubtful if it ever would.

"Quick!" exclaimed Wheeler. "In the rear room. On the bureau there. Some brandy!"

Patsy did not have to be told twice.

He dashed to the rear room and found there, on the bureau, a flask of brandy, and a vial of ammonia.

With these in his grasp he hurried back again to the front room to find that Wheeler had assumed a sitting posture upon the floor, had taken the injured woman in his arms, and with her head pressed tightly against him was rocking back and forth and crooning, as if he were lulling a child to sleep.

When Patsy attempted to administer the restoratives he had brought, Wheeler only looked up at him and said, "Sh! Don't wake her."

"Heavens, man, don't you know that she is dying?" exclaimed Patsy, and he lifted her from Wheeler's arms and bore her across the room to the bed, while the guard, with a heavy sigh, collapsed utterly upon the floor where she had been lying.

But as Patsy placed the woman on the bed, she sighed deeply, and opened her eyes, turning them upon him with wondering amazement.

"Where is he?" she murmured, so that Patsy could barely hear the words. "Where is Jasper? Has he gone? Where is he?"

"Hush!" answered Patsy. "Swallow some of this, and then——"

"Where is Jasper?" she breathed again. "He was here a moment ago. Where is he?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRUGGLE WITH A MADMAN.

There was a space after that first effort to speak when she seemed to lapse into unconsciousness again, but Patsy succeeded in making her swallow some of the brandy, and he also applied the ammonia; and while he did so he called in vain to the train-guard, telling him to go for a doctor.

But no answer came from the stricken man.

The shock of it all had been too great for him, and he had collapsed utterly, so that Patsy was alone with the injured woman, whom he now discovered was young and very beautiful. "I'll hunt down the man who has done this," he muttered while he attended to her. "No one but a foul fiend could do such a hellish act as this."

"What is your name?" he demanded sharply. "Are you Boston Wheeler's wife, or sister?"

She opened her eyes again, and smiled faintly. Evidently she was in no pain; and it was also just as evident that her mind was not clear.

But the mention of the name had recalled something to her, for Patsy heard her murmur:

"Boston? Is he here? Where is he? Tell him that I wish to speak to him."

"He is here," replied Patsy. "He will talk to you in a moment. What is your name, child?"

"Lydia," she replied.

"Who struck you? Tell me that. Who was here when you were hurt?"

"Why, *he* did," she replied. "You know, don't you?"

"No. I don't know. I wish you would tell me."

"*He* did it."

"Who do you mean by *'he'?* Who did it?"

"*He* did."

"Do you mean Jasper?"

"No, no, oh, no! Not he. He wouldn't do such a thing, would he?"

"Who did, then? Tell me."

"Tell you what?"

"Who struck you? Who was fighting here when you were hurt?"

"They——" She got that far and stopped. Patsy waited, but the connected thought had gone out of her injured brain. "Where is Jasper?" she whispered again.

"Jasper has gone," replied Patsy. "Was it Jasper who hurt you, Lydia?"

"No. Jasper wouldn't hurt me, would he? He loved me too well for that, didn't he? You know that he loved me always, don't you? It was a lie that I was told about him. I know that I knew it when it was told to me. Oh, Jasper! Jasper!"

Suddenly she raised herself on the bed and stretched out her arms toward an imaginary individual across the room, and once again, in a loud cry this time, she called out:

"Jasper!"

And then she fell back upon the bed as if she were shot. Her jaw dropped open. Her eyes glazed while Patsy looked into them, and he knew that she was dead. Dead without having been able to explain away any of the mystery with which the young detective was confronted.

For several moments more he worked over her, although he knew, even while he did so, that the effort was utterly useless; and then he used his own handkerchief to fasten her pretty chin where it belonged, and he gently closed the blue eyes that would never again look upon anybody with the light of recognition in them.

When all that was attended to, he turned again toward Boston Wheeler, to discover that the guard was slowly raising himself upon his elbow on the floor; but he discovered another thing as soon as he obtained a fair view of wheeler's face: he realized that the shock of that early morning had done more than steal the man's senses; it had deprived him, temporarily, at least, of the power of reasoning. His mind had become a blank.

Here was a condition of things which nobody could have foreseen, and which was certainly disastrous, as far as Patsy was concerned.

An unknown young woman was lying dead on the bed, and the only man who could have told Nick Carter's as-

sistant about her was temporarily deprived of his power to do so.

That a murder had been committed Patsy knew, but if the few words that the injured woman had uttered meant anything at all, they certainly had not accused Billy Studley of the crime.

And yet it was Billy Studley whom they had expected to find there, in that house. It was he whom they had come there to see; and that he had been there the words of the young woman demonstrated, for, of course, Studley and Ryan were one and the same.

The stricken man raised himself slowly from the floor and tiptoed across it to where Patsy was standing, regarding him with a puzzled expression, for Patsy felt that he was face to face with a conundrum that was difficult of solution.

"Hello, Jasper!" the guard said, smiling weakly, "when did you get here?"

Patsy realized that the man mistook him, for the moment, for the other man they had come there to see, and he resolved to humor the self-deception to the extent of inducing Wheeler to talk all he would, in the hope that he would say something that would supply the key to the enigma.

"I just came," he replied. "What is the matter with you, Boston?"

"Matter? Nothing is the matter. Where is Lydia?"

Patsy was thankful at that instant that he had had the forethought to draw a sheet over the dead body of the girl; and now he replied:

"She has stepped out for a moment. Why? Did you want to see her?"

"I always want to see her, Jasper," was the quick reply. "You know that. But you never let me see her; or, rather, you never permit her to see me."

"You are mistaken——" began Patsy, when Wheeler interrupted him.

"Oh, I know what you will say. You always do say it. You say that you are perfectly willing that she shall see me, and that it is herself who does not want me around. But I don't believe that, curse you!"

"I know you don't, Boston; but it is the truth," said Patsy, determined to follow out the train of the other man's thought as far as possible.

"Truth! Truth! When did you pay any attention to the truth, Ryan? The truth isn't in you, and you know it. What's the matter with this room, anyhow? What has been happening here? I want you to tell me where Lydia is?"

"Perhaps I don't know," suggested Patsy.

"You lie when you say that, and you know it. Of course you know. Why shouldn't you know, eh?"

"Possibly she forgot to tell me."

Boston Wheeler laughed wildly.

"When has there been a time since you appeared on the scene when she has not told you everything?" he demanded. "She began by telling you the inmost secrets of her heart. And then, since you won her love away from me, she has been your slave. It is true, isn't it, you dog? You hound! You scum of the earth!"

"Hush, hush, my friend."

"Your *friend!* Not much! I ain't your friend, and you know it. I hate you, oh, *how* I hate you, Ryan."

"There, there, there, there!" said Patsy soothingly; but the expression seemed only to drive the man he addressed into a deeper fit of temper.

For a moment he glared at Patsy, and then, suddenly and without warning, he leaped forward full at the young detective's throat.

Patsy had no warning of the attack, and he did not in the least expect it. The consequence was that he was totally unprepared for it, and Boston Wheeler had him by the throat before he could avoid him.

It has been said that the strength of a madman is twice redoubled, and it is certain that the statement seemed to be proved by the present circumstance.

Strong and powerful as Patsy was, he felt that he was for the moment helpless in the grasp of this temporarily deranged individual, and, although he struggled with all his own power, he could not shake off that grip, or loosen it, and he was borne steadily backward toward the bed whereon the body of Lydia was lying.

He realized this with a feeling of alarm.

He feared that in their struggles they would disturb that sleep of death, and it seemed a sacrilege to do so.

Again he brought his utmost powers into play, in his efforts to resist the attack that had been made upon him, but Wheeler seemed to be possessed of the strength of ten men, and so Patsy, despite his struggles, was borne steadily backward until at last he felt the frame of the bed behind him, and he knew that the crucial moment had come.

But something happened then upon which the young detective had not counted.

In the struggle, Wheeler's face was, of course, toward

the bed; and, peering over Patsy's shoulder as he fought, he saw the covered face upon the bed.

He seemed to know instinctively what it was, for with a yell of rage he suddenly released his hold upon Patsy, and with another show of the gigantic strength of which he was so suddenly possessed, he threw the young detective clear across the room, and leaped on toward that covered form.

In an instant he had seized upon the sheet and snatched it away from what it concealed; and the sight seemed to paralyze him for the moment.

He stood, staring, while you might have counted ten—just long enough to enable Patsy to recover his equilibrium and start toward him again.

And then it seemed as if he became truly mad.

He uttered a yell of mingled sorrow and rage, and threw himself forward upon the bed for one instant, as if to make sure that there was no mistake.

And then, with the swiftness of a panther, he leaped up again and turned, just as Patsy was almost within reach of him.

The leg of the chair with which the woman had been injured had been kicked along the floor in the struggle and laid almost within reach of his hand, and he bent forward and seized upon it, even as he sprang toward the young detective.

The next instant it was whirled in the air, and brought down with a resounding crash, and with such terrific force that the arm that Patsy raised to ward off the blow was knocked aside, and the weapon struck him on the head, almost as it had, some time previously, struck its other victim.

Only for the arm which he raised in his defense, the blow must have crushed Patsy's skull. Even as it was, it dealt him a severe blow—so severe that he sank beneath it, and fell in a shuddering, trembling heap upon the floor at the madman's feet.

What happened after that Patsy did not know till long afterward, but it may as well be told here, and now.

Boston Wheeler gazed down upon his victim for a moment, with fierce eyes and scowling brow. Then he advanced a step or two and regarded the fallen man carefully.

"I guess he's dead," he muttered.

He turned then toward the bed, and stood for a long time, silent and motionless over the form of the woman he had loved so well.

After a little he sighed deeply, and turned away, but first drawing the sheet back again over the dead face; and he went silently out of the room, never so much as casting another glance at Patsy, on the floor.

Outside the house, Danny had been wondering why somebody did not appear. The house stood back too far from the street for him to hear any of the sounds of that struggle, but when an hour had passed and he saw no sign of any person, he began to think that it was time for him to investigate.

Accordingly, he got down from his seat, passed through the gate and up the walk, and entered the house.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOUBLE TRAGEDY.

What Danny Maloney found when he got inside the house and ascended to the upper floor we already know.

There was a dead woman on the bed, and stretched upon the floor near where she was lying was Patsy, still unconscious, but breathing heavily, so that Danny knew he was alive.

The young chauffeur's first act was to rush forward to Patsy, to lift him and to put him in one of the big chairs of the room that had not been overturned. Then he began to slap his face, and to do other things which he believed adequate to bring the young detective out of his stupor.

While he worked thus, he espied the flask of brandy which Patsy had used in trying to restore Lydia to consciousness, and he succeeded in forcing some of it down Patsy's throat, and he also applied the ammonia.

The blow on Patsy's head had not cut into the skin, and therefore there was no blood; but there was a bump there the size of an egg, and it told Danny, without the necessity of words, what had brought the young detective to his present condition.

But Patsy had remained unconscious about as long as was necessary under the circumstances, and he speedily opened his eyes after the ministrations of Danny, and looked around him.

He realized instantly what had happened, and he murmured a question:

"Where is he?" he asked.

"Where is who?" demanded Danny. "Do you mean that gazabo who came into this house with you?"

"Yes. Where is he?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him."

"Did he get away, do you think?"

"It looks mightily like it, Pat. Did *he* give you that welt on the nut?"

"He sure did. He went mad at sight of the dead woman. She must have been a sweetheart of his at some time in the past. He couldn't stand for it when we found her here. Is *she* all right, Danny?"

"She's as right as a dead woman could be. Say, Pat, you sure have had a time of it since you entered this house. Who killed *her?*"

"I don't know."

"Was she dead when you got here?"

"No; but she died a few minutes later."

"Maybe it was that chap you were chasing that did the job for her."

"It might have been. Raise me up a bit, Danny. That's better. Gee, how my head aches!"

"Swallow a little more of this stuff. What is it? Brandy? Take a drop more of it. So."

"Danny?"

"Yes."

"While I am pulling myself together, take a look through the house, will you?"

"Yes. What for?"

"Find out what there is here. This is the only room in the house I have entered. But, above all, see if you can find out what became of Boston Wheeler."

"The chap who brought you here?"

"Yes. That was his name. He isn't to blame for what has happened, Danny. The poor fellow went clean off his head when we found the girl. When he came to, he thought I was somebody else, and it was because he thought that that he attacked me. He didn't mean what he did."

"All the same——"

"Never mind that now. Go and look for him, and in the meantime I will try to pull out of this. I think I can do it, although that was certainly a welt I got, all right."

But Danny was absent a very short time, and when he returned he came on a run, and with a very white and frightened face, too.

"Say!" he exclaimed, as soon as he was inside the room, "what kind of a joint is this we have broken into, anyhow?"

"What's the matter now?" asked Patsy.

"I was just wondering if it was the fashion for everybody to be dead around here."

"What do you mean, Danny?"

"Well, you sent me to find Boston Wheeler, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"I found him, all right."

"Where is he, then?"

"He's in the rear room on this floor, and say, he is dead, too."

"*What?*"

"It is true, Patsy."

"What do you mean? Has he killed himself?"

"Yes. Shot himself; and beside him, alongside of the pistol he used, is a picture of that girl on the bed. It looks as if he had carried it in his pocket a long time, and just took it out to have a last look at it before he did the act."

"Poor chap!" said Patsy. "Come. I will go in and have a look at him."

The two went together into the next room, and in a moment after they arrived there Patsy pounced upon a sheet of paper that was on the bureau at one side of the room. It contained written words, and these Patsy read aloud:

"To the Police. There is no use of my trying to live any longer. I have just killed a man, and an innocent one at that, so I may as well peg out. I have been going to do this, anyhow, for a long time, but I never got quite up to the scratch. I was mad when I killed the fellow in the next room, and didn't know what I did, but that makes no difference; I killed him, anyway. I thought he was Jasper Ryan . . . Lydia is dead, and she is the only woman I ever loved. Ryan stole her away from me. I think I could have forgiven him for that if he had made her happy, but when I found out lately that he had another wife, somewhere in one of the New England States, it set me wild. He hasn't lived with his wife for two or three years, but that don't make no difference: he was married to her, and therefore he deceived Lydia. I came near killing him when I saw him on the train last night, and I wish now that I had done so, for then he wouldn't have come up here and killed Lydia. Yes; you will find her in the front room, too. He killed her. Jasper Ryan is the man. Get him. Send him to the electric chair if you care anything about the wishes of a dying man.

"Boston Wheeler."

"Well, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Danny, who was always irrepressible.

"I think," replied Patsy, "that it is, take it all in all, about the saddest bit of experience I have ever met with. Danny?"

"Yes."

"Take the car and drive to the nearest police-station. Tell the captain or the lieutenant in charge all that has happened here, only do not mention the name of Billy Studley."

"Why should I?"

"Because Jasper Ryan and Billy Studley are one and the same."

"Oh."

"Bring some of the cops back here with you, and ask them to notify the coroner from the station-house; and make haste about it all, will you?"

"Sure. I suppose you'll stay here on guard till I return; eh?"

"Yes."

The policemen came, and at last the coroner appeared, and Patsy was forced to remain there until he had related all that he knew about the case. He was careful, however, to keep back such particulars as were not necessary to relate, for he did not wish it to be known yet what had taken him there. He told only that he was in search of Ryan, from whom he expected to obtain some information; and he added:

"Although Wheeler, in his note, written just before he killed himself, has charged Ryan with the murder of the girl who believed herself to be his wife, I don't much think he did it. The few words she said to me didn't point that way. However, it won't do any harm to charge him with the crime, and give him an opportunity to explain himself—if he is ever caught, which I begin to doubt."

It was half-past ten in the forenoon when he and Danny finally drove away from the house, and, remembering his engagement with Petrosini, Patsy had himself taken directly to police headquarters.

It was noon when he arrived at police headquarters, but Petrosini was there awaiting him.

"I ought to have been out of here two hours ago," he told Patsy, "but the very fact that you were late led me to think that you would have something to report; and I see that you have, by the look of you. What is it?"

Patsy began at the beginning then, and related all that had occurred, from the moment of their parting.

"Didn't you go through that house from top to bottom?" asked the headquarters detective. "Studley should have left some sort of a clue there."

"I went through it, all right, while Danny was at the police-station," replied Patsy. "But if there is a clue there, I couldn't find it."

"No letters or papers of any kind?"

"Plenty of them; but nothing to aid us in our search."

"I know you are thorough, Patsy. Carter has taught you to be all that, and more; but are you sure that you searched everywhere?"

"Dead sure."

"It was unabubtedly Studley who married the girl, wasn't it?"

"There is no doubt of that whatever."

"And he had been there last night, hadn't he?"

"I don't think there is any doubt of that, either."

"How long do you suppose he could have been gone from the house when you arrived there?"

"That is hard to say; but the probability is that he had been gone more than an hour."

"You said something about a half-packed suit-case, and other things. Tell me more about them, will you?"

"Well, I looked rather thoroughly into that part of it while Danny was after the police, and I came to the conclusion that Ryan—or Studley, whichever you please to call him—was already gone from the house when Lydia began her packing."

"What makes you think that?"

"It looked so to me. There was absolutely nothing of his about the house, save several worn suits of clothing, and some soiled linen. It looked to me as if he had packed and gone, and that after that she had decided to follow him, either by permission or at his request, or of her own will."

"Go on. Give me the benefit of your opinion all the way through. You were there on the ground, and I was not. But I must say that it looks to me as if he killed her. That other wife business gives it that look."

"Possibly he did; only I don't think so. I think he was absent from the house when it was done."

"Go on, then. Give me your own personal opinion about the whole affair."

"I can do that; but you must understand that my opinion is based more upon intuition than upon anything

tangible. I am only conjecturing from what I saw there, and from what the injured woman said to me."

"Let me hear it, all the same, Patsy."

"All right. You may have it for what it is worth."

CHAPTER X.

PETROSINI'S THEORY OF THE CRIME.

"In the first place," said Patsy, "according to my way of figuring, Studley must have arrived at that house about eleven o'clock last night, or soon after it."

"Well?"

"It was almost an hour after daylight when I got there. In other words, it was about six this morning."

"Yes."

"From eleven at night till six in the morning is seven hours. Now, if I am right in supposing that Studley would figure to leave there before daylight, he must have taken his departure about four o'clock—and at that he would have had five hours in which to make his preparations for departure."

"Granted."

"He would require no more than that. You are of the opinion that he had already made his other arrangements to go, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Then all he had to do was to see the woman he loved, bid her good-by, or arrange for her to follow him, pack his things, and go."

"Well?"

"I take it that he did exactly that thing. When he parted with me at the Thirty-third Street entrance to the Waldorf, he was not hurrying to catch a train, but was in haste to get to that house so that he would have time to pack and leave it before daylight.

"He forgot, in his haste, that he had an acquaintance on the down-town side of the station where he took the train, or, if he remembered it, he figured that the ticket-agent would be in his box, and would not see him."

"That's the idea, I think."

"But he had the misfortune to board the very train and car on which the man who had loved Lydia was a guard. Those two incidents would tend to make him increase his haste to get away, and would make him hurry all the more after he reached the house."

"Perhaps so."

"If we suppose he arrived at the house about eleven, he found Lydia awaiting him. Possibly he had sent word, or had told her that he would be there about that time. The bed in the room where I found her—which was evidently their room—had not been occupied, so she had been sitting up awaiting him when he arrived."

"Go on."

"Then, of course, he had to break the news to her of his going. I think the man is sufficiently cool and calculating to have realized that it would be extremely unsafe for her to attempt to travel with him, but I do not think—I don't know why I don't think so, but I do not think—that he intended to break away from her."

"I suppose he told her then of his villainy, and why he had to go, and, womanlike, she insisted upon clinging to him."

"Without doubt. The suit-case proves that."

"Well, can't you imagine the scene as he went about his preparation, telling her all the time of his plans, and describing to her the route she should take in order to overtake him?"

"Yes. In part."

"I imagine that he had always been careful to leave nothing about that house which would connect him with Billy Studley—with his true self, and, as a consequence, there was very little that it was necessary to destroy."

"That would be his way, I think."

"I think she assisted him in packing. It was thorough, at least, and men are not usually thorough about such things. Nothing was left around for me to find. There was not a collar on the floor, or a forgotten tie lying about anywhere, all of which suggests that her hands did most of the packing."

"Well?"

"I think that he left here as soon as he was prepared to do so—at almost any time between midnight and four in the morning; probably about two, or three at the latest."

"Very likely, if we accept your way of figuring it out."

"As soon as he was gone, I suppose she seated herself, and had what a woman calls a good cry, after which she bestirred herself with her own packing."

"And right there, Patsy, is where you are at fault."

"How so?"

"He would never have told her to pack and leave at once."

"Certainly not—but she would do it just the same. Don't you understand that she could not bear to stay a moment longer than was necessary in that house after he had left it, and for good and all?"

"Perhaps you are right."

"I sure am right. When he talked with her, she agreed to live on quietly there until the time was up for her to start for the place where they were to meet; but after he was gone it was different. She couldn't bear the thought of remaining there, and she told herself that she would get out at once.

"You see, Petro, she had a thousand dollars in the bureau drawer, in cash. I found it and turned it over to the coroner. That is the money he left with her to use until they met again."

"Very possibly."

"With all that money it would have been very easy for her to live anywhere she pleased until it was time to start after the man she supposed to be her husband."

"Admitted."

"So, after she had had her cry, she jumped up and began packing her things, saying to herself that she wouldn't remain a minute inside that house after daylight; and I think she must have been in the midst of her packing when she was interrupted."

"Ah! That is the point. Who interrupted her?"

"I wish I knew. I'd make it my business to go after him, whoever he is."

"But don't your reasoning-powers travel far enough to offer an explanation to that question?"

"Hardly. I can think of but one answer."

"What is it?"

"The old one of a burglar happening in."

"It won't hold water, Patsy."

"I don't think so myself."

"Then, who *did* interrupt her?"

"If it wasn't for the fact that Boston killed himself and left the letter he did, Petro, I'd be very much inclined to think that he did it himself."

"Now you're talking!"

"What? Do you really suppose that he did it?"

"I can't find any other answer to the question."

"How do you explain it?"

"Like this: You say he was in love with the girl. In the letter he left behind him when he killed himself, he said that Ryan had stolen her away from him. He also said he had discovered that Ryan had another wife somewhere in one of the New England States, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"And also, when Ryan, or Studley, went there last night he rode up-town on the same car where Boston, as you call him, is a guard, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Of course, he knew where Ryan was going."

"Of course."

"He had, also, according to his letter, just found out about the other wife. By his own confession, he was several times, or at least once, on the point of killing the man, there on the elevated train."

"Yes."

"Well, Ryan—we may as well continue to call him that for the present—Ryan had to ride to the end of the route on that car. He was too proud to leave it and get into another car; I know enough about him to realize that."

"What of it?"

"What of it? Why, all the time he sat in that car, Boston was watching him furtively, trying to make up his mind to kill him; trying to screw his courage up to the sticking-point; but he probably let his man leave the car without touching him or speaking to him."

"Exactly; and that——"

"Wait a moment."

"Well?"

"When he saw Ryan go away unharmed, he thought what a fool he had been not to have killed the fellow while he had a chance, and then and there he made up his mind to do it, anyhow. He followed——"

"You forget that he could not leave his train, and also that I found him on the train going down-town later."

"No, I don't. I remember that you found him long enough afterward to have permitted his car to have traveled to South Ferry and back again, from One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street. And that time the car took would have been long enough for him to have done the deed, only, don't you see, when he got there Ryan had gone."

"But how could he leave his car?"

"There are always extras around at the end of the lines. There have to be. He could have played sick, and, by paying for it, have gotten one of them to run a trip for him."

"All that sounds very logical, only there is one flaw in it, Petro."

"What is it?"

"If he followed Ryan from the train, why didn't he kill Ryan, and not the girl?"

"I admit the flaw. I explain it in this way."

"Well?"

"He could not secure a substitute for that particular trip, but somebody promised to run the next trip for him; so he traveled all the way to South Ferry again, and back, chewing on his wrongs. By the time he had returned, he was ready to kill a regiment of Ryans. He found his substitute ready, and he left the train. He went across the city to the house, and he entered it just after Ryan had gone."

"Go on. Go on."

"There isn't much more to my theory, but it is this: He couldn't get into that house without ringing the bell, could he?"

"Not unless he broke his way in."

"Well, when he arrived there, Lydia must have been alone. He rang the bell, intending to kill Ryan if he should come to the door. Lydia supposed the ring was Ryan's; that he had returned for something. She ran down to the door, opened it, and Boston forced his way into the house and followed her up-stairs, where she ran to avoid him, being alone."

"I am beginning to think as you do, Petro."

"I am quite certain of it. Boston found that Lydia was already packing to follow Ryan, who had already departed. He told her of the other wife, and Lydia refused to believe. He charged her with getting ready to go away out of the city with Ryan, and she admitted it, perhaps. She flouted him and called him a liar, I haven't a doubt. She ordered him out of the house, and he refused to go. The man was mad even then."

"Undoubtedly."

"Then came the struggle. How it began we cannot even conjecture; but how it ended we already know."

CHAPTER XI.

A BUNCH OF THEORIES.

Patsy was silent for several moments after that. At last he said:

"I suppose, to continue with your theory, that Boston, as soon as he had committed the deed, very probably did not realize that he had killed her. Doubtless he fled the moment he had struck the blow, and, returning to his train and car, was there when I encountered him."

"He was there, that is certain. Whether he realized what he had done or not is another matter. Possibly he did not, and for that reason was willing to take you to the house. He wished to go there himself, and he was afraid to do so. He probably thought that he might have killed her, and he was crazy to find out if he had done so."

"I think that is the more likely idea."

"Anyhow, he was cunning enough to say to himself that there would be things enough around the house to prove Ryan's occupancy of it, and he argued to himself that if Lydia was dead, he could make you believe that Ryan did it. And there are two more considerations for us."

"What are they?"

"One was that he demanded the hundred dollars of you for taking you there. He didn't care so much for the money as he did want to possess himself of sufficient to take him out of the country, in case she was dead."

"That is probably true."

"And, again, you told me that he insisted upon knowing your name."

"What of that?"

"Simply this: If you had said you were Nick Carter, or even a detective, he would not have taken you there. But the name Garvan meant nothing to him. You said yourself that he manifested no interest in it after he had heard it."

"None whatever."

"All of which carries out our theory. You see, Patsy, the man was undoubtedly already mad. He had gone to that house and committed the dread deed, but he had run away without being certain of the effect of his blow. He was eager to return there and know just what had been the result of it. When you appeared on the train, and asked about Ryan, it seemed like the finger of fate to him. After that he could not have done otherwise than he did do if he had tried."

"I believe you are right. But how about the letter he left, after he killed himself?"

"That was pure malignancy. He told himself that he would pursue Ryan, even after he was dead; and he came pretty near doing it, too."

"Well, anyhow, he is dead. If he did commit the murder, we haven't got him to chase all over the world. What I am most interested in now is to find Studley, or

Ryan, and to know what the chief meant when he wrote that letter."

"It would seem, Patsy, that every trail you have struck has led you up against a blind wall."

"Decidedly so."

"Well, I can only promise you one thing, and that is that Studley has not left the city."

"How do you know that?"

"Because he couldn't get out of it."

"Rats! If you'll excuse me for saying so. What was there to prevent him from leaving it, I'd like to know?"

"After you left me last night, I returned here satisfied that I could not strike the trail of Studley. When I got back here, I secured the proper authority, and then I had every possible outlet from the city manned."

"It wouldn't take a very smart chap to get past all the manning you could do, Petro."

"Yes, it would. If Studley was inside the city limits at one o'clock this morning—and we have every reason to believe he was—he is here now, and some time to-day we will find him. Do you realize that there are over four thousand policemen in the city, and what a house-to-house search would mean?"

"I don't think it would mean anything at all."

"I do. Anyhow, I am giving it a trial. If Studley is in the city, he will be found."

"What about Nick Carter?"

"I am having him searched for, also."

"Well, your method may be all right, but I haven't a particle of faith in it. So far as this Studley business is concerned, it can go hang for all of me. All I want is to find the chief, and find him I will, somehow."

"All by your lonesome?"

"Yes; if necessary."

"Well, bear in mind that I am doing all I can to help you all the time; and if you want any further assistance let me know."

"I will."

"And mind, if you happen to run across Studley, hang on to him for me, won't you?"

"Sure thing."

"Where are you going now?"

"Home."

"Why?"

"I think Chick is there by this time. I wired for him to come."

"Telephone me, will you, if anything turns up?"

"Yes. So-long."

The first person whom Patsy encountered when he entered the house was Chick, who had only just arrived, and he was all eagerness to learn why he had been sent for, and why the chief was not there to receive him when he arrived.

And Patsy was not long in making him acquainted with all that had taken place during the night that was past.

Chick listened to the end with never a word of interruption; but when Patsy had concluded the recital, he said:

"Let me see the letter that you say Nick sent to you."

Patsy handed it over, and the first assistant studied it with great care.

"Nick wrote it, all right," he said at last. "I would have taken my oath that it was some sort of a forgery, but I don't think it is, after all. It's a strange business, Patsy."

"It's the biggest conundrum I ever tackled, all right."

"It has been a sort of double-barreled puzzle all around, hasn't it?"

"That it has; and say, Chick, I am about as near dead as I ever was in my life, and still keep moving. My head isn't worth the powder to blow it up, right now. I cannot even think with accuracy. The whole thing has been too much for me."

"You are tired out, that is what is the matter with you. Turn in for an hour while I go over this business, won't you? You can't do any good by keeping awake, and a little sleep will do you a lot of good."

"All right, old fellow. I'll do it."

When Chick was left alone he began to go carefully over the ground of the tale that Patsy had told him.

"First," he told himself, "there was the letter, supposedly from Nick, coming to the house as strangely as it did—and the entire letter hinges upon that strange expression that he used in writing it, 'See Billy Studley.'

"Now, why in the world should he have incorporated that in his hasty note? Plainly, it was important that Studley should be seen, for the letter was written in evident haste, and Nick would never have made that request unless he had wished it to be fulfilled. 'See Billy Studley. *See Billy Studley!*' What in the world can it mean?"

He pondered over the conundrum for a long time, obtaining no satisfactory answer.

But suddenly, when he had been in that state for almost an hour, he leaped to his feet with a shout, and sent Joseph at once to call Patsy.

The second assistant came to him, sleepy-eyed and dopey from his short but sound sleep.

"I was sorry to have to disturb you, Patsy," said Chick, "but I had to ask you some questions. I wonder if you have got sense enough to reply to them. You don't look so just now."

"I can make a stab at it, all right. What are they?"

"I want you to tell me all over again about that first interview you had with Petrosini."

"Why? What has all that to do——"

"Never mind. Answer a few questions for me."

"All right. Drive ahead."

"Petro was surprised when you asked him who Billy Studley was, wasn't he?"

"He certainly was."

"And when you went down to the office to see him, didn't he tell you that nobody in the city save one or two of his own officers, and the men who had been robbed, knew about the peculations of Studley?"

"Yes."

"Didn't he express himself as certain that Nick knew nothing about it?"

"He did."

"Then, isn't it logical for us to take the ground of supposing that he was right, and that Nick did know nothing about what Studley had done when he wrote that note?"

"I think it is."

"Now, that is settled, so far as this present argument is concerned."

"Well?"

"Then we must eliminate from this case all that part of Studley that has to do with the crime he committed, and only ask ourselves why Nick should have expressed the wish that you see Studley."

"Confound it, man, haven't I been asking myself that question all the time, ever since I received that message?"

"I suppose you have, only you haven't asked yourself in the right way."

"Why not?"

"You have been connecting the note with Studley's crime all the time, and I think now that it has nothing to do with it."

"Go on. You have got more on your mind. Get it off."

"Let me tell you this first. Studley and Nick used to be friends, years ago. Studley went wrong. He did something that Nick considered dishonorable, and he would have nothing more to do with him. I haven't heard him mention Studley's name from that day to this, as intimate as I am with the chief."

"I have never heard him mention it at all."

"Very likely not."

"What are you getting at?"

"There is only one reason, then, why he should have mentioned it now."

"Eh? What is that?"

"Studley has made some sort of appeal to Nick. You can depend upon that. Nick's heart is so tender and so faithful that a man who has once been his friend can always appeal to him if he happens to be in trouble, no matter what the past may hold. Therefore, Studley has made some sort of an appeal to Nick. I think I can see it now; and Nick, in the goodness of his heart, has gone to see Studley."

"Well, what of it? What has that got to do with——"

"Listen! Studley lives all alone in a big house, where his wife once lived with him. That is, he sleeps there, nothing more. There isn't a servant in the house, and hasn't been one there since she left it."

"Well?"

"Well, as things have turned out, Studley has had to make a getaway, and he has had to do it mighty sudden; *and now I think that in some manner Nick has got shut up in that house.*"

"Gee, Chick! do you really think that?"

"I really do."

CHAPTER XII.

THE ANSWER TO THE PUZZLE.

"I don't see how that could happen," expostulated Patsy.

"I'll tell you. We must first put two and two together in Studley's case."

"Go on."

"He, of course, knew that the time was approaching when he must be found out and have to skip. Naturally, he thought about Nick. Quite as naturally he wished that Nick were still his friend, and no doubt it occurred to him that Nick might be induced to do something to

help him out. He might even have thought of borrowing the money of him, to make his thefts good."

"That is likely enough."

"Well, let us say, for argument's sake, that he wrote a letter to Nick, and that Nick went there to see him, in reply to it."

"Go on."

"Can't you imagine Studley's appealing to Nick's sympathies, until he arrived at the point where he had to confess that he wanted the money to pay up thefts he had committed?"

"Nick wouldn't have much sympathy for him after that."

"That is the point. Nick has probably thrown him down hard, when it came to that point, and Studley, in desperation, has done something."

"What could he do?"

"Studley is a powerful man, for one thing. Nick would never expect a blow of any kind from him, for another. If he struck out quick and hard, with some sort of weapon, he would get Nick before the latter had any idea that he was going to do it. Now, suppose he has knocked the chief senseless."

"Well; go on. I can't hardly suppose that; but go on."

"He'd know for sure that he was up against it, then, wouldn't he? Remember he is almost, if not quite, as powerful a man as Nick himself. He could strike a hard blow, and if Nick were taken unawares, it would have its effect."

"I'm all attention, Chick."

"Supposing I am right, having knocked Nick down, he would lug him away somewhere, into the cellar or an attic, and leave him there until he had a chance to make terms with him."

"But Nick says in his letter that he doesn't know where he is."

"Probably he doesn't—or didn't when he wrote that letter, and chucked it out of a window, wrapped around a gold piece, to the first boy he saw passing. Anyhow, that is the only way in which I can get any sense out of the affair."

"What next? What is Studley doing with Nick all this time?"

"Can't you answer that? Studley probably went out after that, and left Nick almost alone in the house, tied up so that he couldn't get away——"

"He could write."

"Well, he might have been chained up then. But the point is that Nick—if he is there—has been left alone in that house all this time, with nobody to give him anything to eat or drink. I don't believe there has been a particle of food in that house for two years."

"Do you know where the house is?"

"I do."

"Then what are we sitting here talking for?"

"I was thinking of something else."

"What was it?"

"Petrosini seemed to be mighty certain, didn't he, that Studley had not left the city?"

"He was almost positive about it."

"Then I think I will change my mind about one part of what I just said."

"Which part?"

"The part that said that Nick was alone in that house. Just at this present moment I'd be willing to bet my pile that Studley is in that house himself. It is the very last place where the police would think of looking for him, and doubtless, if they did so, they would not find him. He has had ample time to fix up a place inside that house, in which he could hide, and defy all the searches that might be made."

"Anyhow, it won't take us long to find out."

"It must be done quietly, Patsy; very quietly."

"I realize that."

"If Studley has a hiding-place in that house, it is a good one, and we don't want to send him into it. We ought to enter the house, if possible, without giving the least alarm—and the way to do that, Patsy, is by the roof."

"Good! Can we get to it?"

"Certainly. Are you game for the expedition, or are you too tired?"

"*Tired!* I was never fresher in my life. It was worry that was killing me, not fatigue."

"Then I think your worries will soon be over. Come on."

They left the house together soon after that and hastened to that part of the city where Studley's residence was located.

But they approached it cautiously, and finally Chick rang the bell of a house several doors away from it, where he mentioned the name of the people who lived there, and asked if he might see some one in authority.

The woman of the house came to him presently, and to her he told the entire story, assuring her that he thought it best to take her into his confidence because of what he wished her to do for him.

What he sought was permission to go to the roof and to make his way across it to the house that belonged to Studley; although this was a story higher, he knew he would find it an easy matter to reach the top from his point of vantage.

She readily gave the desired permission, and, after a little more delay, Chick and Patsy went to the top of the house, prepared to scale the higher roof beyond, and to overcome any obstacles that might offer in entering Billy Studley's house.

They found this latter not an easy task.

The scuttle had not only been nailed down, it had also been screwed fast; but at last Chick succeeded in prying it open, and noiselessly, too; and as silently as ghosts the two assistant detectives let themselves down inside, and presently found stairs where they could descend to the lower floors.

They had reached the second floor of the building when they heard voices conversing, and they both stopped, and almost held their breath while they listened.

Then they pinched each other in the glee they felt at their discovery, for one of the voices they heard belonged to Nick Carter, and the other one Patsy instantly recognized as the same he had listened to at the Waldorf when he talked with "Jasper Ryan."

"This is the very last appeal I shall make to you, Carter," Studley was saying. "I have banked upon your doing what I now ask. I have laid my plans accordingly, and it is up to you to do it for me."

"Which I will not do," replied Nick, in a quiet tone.

"Oh, confound your scruples! What's the harm? I ask you to disguise me so that I can pass out of the city without being recognized. I know that you can do it."

"Yes; I could do it if I would, but I won't."

"Not even to save your own life?"

"I won't do it; that's all about it."

"Just disguise me and let me go. Promise me to say nothing about what you know, and not to take the case against me. That is all I ask."

"You are wasting your time, and mine. If you are going to get away, you had better be about it. My assistants will be looking for me presently, and they will find me, too. I will tell you right now that I managed to send word to them, and I believe it was delivered."

"Yes. It was delivered," said Studley bitterly. "It passed through my hands, too; and I never thought it could have anything to do with this affair. I didn't know that the note was from you; I thought it was to you."

"Passed through your hands?" exclaimed Nick.

And then Studley told him all about it.

"If I had only stopped to read the note," he said, "I would have held it; but I didn't. Anyhow, they haven't a sign of a clue to go upon, for the boy was hurt, died soon afterward, and—well, they won't find you, that's all about it."

"I think they will," replied Nick, with emphasis.

"Now, Carter, for the last time, will you do that favor for me? If you refuse, I swear I will leave you here as you are, chained to the wall, to starve. I swear——"

"You needn't take the trouble to swear, Mr. Studley," said Chick quietly, and he stepped into the room and confronted the man.

Studley's only reply was to burst into laughter. He did not offer them the slightest resistance when handcuffs were placed upon his wrists; and he did not utter another sound, either, when he was led away finally, and taken to headquarters by Patsy, to be turned over to Petrosini.

They found that Chick had gussed the exact truth in regard to the letter, and how it had come about. The detective had been knocked senseless by Studley, at a moment when he was off his guard, and he had, for a time, been kept in a closed room at the top of the house. From there Nick had managed to write the note and throw it out to a passing boy, over the top of one of the wooden shutters which he succeeded in prying partly open. And that was all the mystery about Patsy's conundrum.

It was found later that Boston Wheeler *did* commit the crime at the house in upper New York, and he did it in much the manner that Petrosini outlined in his talk with Chick.

But so ends the tale.

THE END.

The next number (578) will contain "An Automobile Duel; or, Nick Carter and His Best Friend Work Together."

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TALKS WITH OUR READERS.

Pity the poor burglar who, as an alternative to starving to death, is forced to call in the assistance of the police! And such was the unhappy lot of a Parisian confrère of Bill Sikes, who recently essayed to burgle a house in the suburbs of Paris in the absence of the household on their holidays. He had gathered together ready for removal a splendid assortment of portable articles, when he was attracted by the solid appearance of the door of a cupboard. Although painted to resemble wood, it proved to be iron, and a self-closing door, to boot, which, however, only enhanced his desire to be acquainted with what lay beyond. He applied his professional skill to the task with a right good-will, and, after a little difficulty, succeeded in picking the lock.

It opened upon a deep closet, at the end of which, under a narrow window placed high up under the ceiling and barred with cross-bars, was a most alluring chest, almost big enough to have contained the wealth of Dives. But the burglar was a precautious man, and, in view of the fact that the door was self-closing and could only be opened from without, he propped it open by placing a chisel between it and the jamb before entering the closet.

Thus secured of his line of communication, he examined the trunk. It was heavy, and its contents gave forth a metallic sound, which was as music in his ears. But it was locked, and, losing his head in anticipation of a rich haul of silver plate, he turned and seized the first handy tool—the chisel, to wit. And the door closed with a snap. After nearly thirty hours' futile attempt to break out of either door or window, he got his head through the bars of the window, which he could just reach by standing in the chest, and called for the police. They were not lacking of attentiveness.

A somewhat similar contretemps occurred to a youthful burglar in North London some time ago. He was a slim youth, and made his entrance into a house by way of the coal-hole, the coal-cellar being directly connected with the basement of the house. The descent was, doubtless, difficult; but the ascent was infinitely more so. He found it so impossible to get through with his pockets full of loot that he had to arrange the spoons, etc., on the pavement around the coal-hole, preparatory to making his exit. Then he mounted a beer-barrel, and got his head and arms through the trap; and at that moment the barrel gave way. He slipped back a short distance, and his coat, not slipping with him, folded up in rolls around his shoulders, holding him a prisoner until a slow-footed policeman chanced his way, and had the impertinence to inquire to whom the visible head and frantically waving arms might happen to belong.

Apart from accidents, the losses of the dealer in strange animals are very heavy. The animals do not belong to this country, and they are in captivity, while their natural state is freedom. Even at the zoological gardens, where the utmost care is exercised, and where everything possible is done to remind the animals of their natural surroundings, two corpses, on an average, are taken to the dead-house every morning.

The deaths among a dealer's stock figure much higher, his animals being more exposed, and at the same time less accustomed to the climate. Chill seems to be the chief cause of death to wild animals in captivity. In this way Jamrach, the dealer in Ratcliffe Highway, London, lost eighteen lion cubs, worth $150 each, in a few days; in one week, five giraffes, worth $500 each, and, in a similarly short time, four elephants, which had been sold for $4,000, and were on the point of being shipped to New York.

Another heavy loss accrued through the death of a rhinoceros, valued at $4,000. This animal died in so mysterious a manner that its corpse was sent to the Zoological Society's prosector for post-mortem examination.

The prosector still remembers that post mortem. How he had to get right inside the carcass of the huge monster to perform the autopsy, and how, even so, the muscular exertion was more like what a workman might put forth in opening a drain than the skilled operator with the scalpel. The cause of death was found to be suffocation, an abscess in the rhinoceros' throat having eaten its way into and perforated the windpipe. The origin of the abscess was due to its treatment while still in the hands of the natives. They had tied it by the neck to a tree, and its continued tugging had set up the irritation that led to the cancerous growth. Thus the real hide of the rhinoceros, unlike the proverbial one, is penetrable!

Chill has already been instanced as a leading cause of death to rare animals in the hands of dealers. In zoological gardens deaths often happen through the mistaken conduct of visitors. Recently a hippopotamus died at the Berlin Gardens. It was opened, and an india-rubber ball was found inside it. Now, the hippopotami are covered in with wire netting at Berlin. Overfeeding by visitors is a frequent cause of death.

At one time Jamrach had an ostrich with the run on the ground floor of his stables. In a post on that floor was

usually stuck, when not in use, the butcher's knife wherewith the meat was cut for the carnivora. The knife suddenly disappeared and could not be found. The ostrich died, was cut open, and the knife was found inside.

Some of the intensely interesting stories of Nick Carter in the past have had to do with sea-diving, and here are some facts connected with that business which, we believe, will be of real interest to our readers.

The dangers and terrors of diving have ever been the subject of much visionary exaggeration. Men who have spent their lives in subaqueous performances agree that the profession is, if anything, far less dangerous than many which are carried on upon dry land.

To be a good diver, a man must be slight and wiry, and have a strong constitution. So long as there is no organic disease, the occupation is by no means an unhealthy one.

As a matter of fact, serious accidents seldom occur, provided ordinary care is exercised. The perils of diving are, for the most part, entirely imaginary, if only small matters are attended to as well as big.

A very popular error is with regard to the beauties of the bottom of the sea. The ideas on the subject which have got abroad are hopelessly extravagant. The enchanted dazzling halls, whose pearl-paved courts are graced with dainty mermaids, are composed of slimy sediment, sand, seaweed, and other strange but scarcely beauteous objects of the deep.

There is another common delusion, that the small fishes fly in all directions at the appearance of the diver, while he himself is in jeopardy at the jaws of sharks and other mammoth monsters down below.

In reality all fishes keep their inquisitive little eyes on the newcomer, and swarm around with their heads ever turned toward him. If the intruder keeps still, they will swim nearer and press their noses very inquiringly against his armor.

Fish of any kind have seldom been known to attack a diver, and sharks will generally pass him by unnoticed. The smaller members of the finny tribe will, as a rule, accompany their visitor to the surface again, when, his business ended, he reascends.

It is practically dark a short distance down, and the diver is compelled to feel his way about. The eyes, however, soon grow used to the obscurity, and an electric light sent down is not of the smallest help. In fact, it makes matters worse, by giving the water a thick, milky appearance, so that the submarine explorer is lost, as it were, in a fog.

Finally, it will probably be news to a good many of our readers to hear that working in rivers is far more dangerous than in the open sea.

At Glasgow, in Scotland, there was a battle fought between storks and bees. A swarm of bees was flying over a house on the roof of which a couple of storks had their nest with three young in it. The old storks probably thought they had to defend their domain, and began chasing and capturing some bees. These, interrupted in their journey, began settling on the roof, crowds of them alighting on the nest. The old storks tried to rescue their little ones and attacked the bees fiercely, which, finding themselves opposed and checked, made free use of their stings. Then the old storks flew away to fetch reenforcements, and soon more than a dozen storks were assembled around the nest and did fearful execution among the bees. These finally resumed their journey, their ranks being greatly reduced in numbers, but they had stung the three little storks to death.

GENTLEMAN JACK, THE OUTLAW.

BY WILLIAM H. LILLIS.

It was with a sensation of supreme joy that Frank Greyling left grim old Mr. Raynor's private office. When he entered it half an hour before he had no expectation that his whole future career was to be affected by the interview, but now he left it feeling assured that his life was drifting toward a brighter and broader channel.

To be favored by such a sour old gentleman as Mr. Raynor was a piece of good luck, and Frank Greyling had, indeed, been favored. He was only a poor clerk in the banking-house of Samuel Raynor, and when he was summoned before that gentleman, his surprise can be imagined when a subject was broached that made him feel that a high honor had been paid him.

The conversation that ensued was to this effect: A large, productive mining-claim in Colorado had fallen under the notice of Mr. Raynor. It was for sale, and he had determined to buy it. But in those days—for our story treats of events of years ago—mails and similar accommodations were irregular and unsafe, and he had disliked to conduct any negotiations through such mediums; so it was necessary to send a trusted agent to purchase the mine. The young man received his instructions, and was ordered to start on his journey the next night. He was given a large amount of money with which to make the purchase—real money, too, for checks or drafts would probably be declined in the isolated district that he was to visit.

It was several weeks before Greyling, traveling by the tedious coaches that existed in those days, arrived in Colorado, but at last, one June evening, he found himself standing before a rudely constructed two-story inn, about thirty miles from his destination.

While awaiting the stage-coach at this point, Greyling received information which made him rather uneasy. This information related to the exploits of a noted road-agent, known as Gentleman Jack, who had been a terror to timid travelers in that part of the country.

The driver of the stage-coach which left the little Colorado inn that night did not seem a person to invite confidence; and, as Greyling was the only traveler from this point, his reflections were not very cheerful.

The vehicle had kept the main road, and was laboring along a rocky lane that led through a dense forest, when an alarming incident occurred. A large stone crashed through the stage-lamp, sending the shattered glass in all directions. Before Greyling could recover from his astonishment, for midnight darkness put everything in gloom, he felt himself jerked from the stage, and in a moment more sank to the ground, unconscious, from a violent blow on the head.

He was in the hands of Gentleman Jack, who had struck him senseless with the butt of his pistol.

When Greyling came to his senses he was in a rude chamber in the outlaw's dwelling, whither he had been conveyed by the outlaw's confederates, and he had been searched and plundered.

It would be difficult to portray the tide of emotions that surged through his soul as he lay in that darkened chamber upon the hard floor, where the outlaws had thrown him. All his bright thoughts—all the hopes of a brilliant future were now things of the past. Before him was naught but disgrace, for what would his employer think of him for having permitted himself to be robbed?

His painful reflections were forced to give way to the realities of the present, when he heard the key turned in the lock.

A stream of light flashed into the room, and he observed some one enter.

For an instant he thought that he was dreaming—that the beautiful being who entered the room was but a creature of his imagination, but that idea was dispelled when she spoke.

"I have come to save you," murmured the intruder, a beautiful girl.

The young man gazed in enraptured silence on the girl's radiant eyes and wealth of golden hair. He seemed spellbound by the beauty of her face and the shapeliness of her form. She could not have been more than seventeen, and her attractiveness was increased tenfold in Greyling's eyes by the comparison between her and her surroundings.

"I have come to save you," she repeated, raising the lamp that she held on a line with her head, so that she could command a better view of him.

"Why do you take the trouble?" Greyling asked, getting on his feet.

"Because I must not allow a human being to die. I must do something to counteract the wickedness of this house," the fair girl replied, a shade of sadness clouding her face.

"Who are you?"

"Ah, when you know who I am, you will look on me with suspicion, for, alas! I am the daughter of the man who has doomed you to die!"

"Impossible!" said Greyling, astonished that a scoundrel like Gentleman Jack should be blessed with such a child—such a vision of loveliness.

"Alas! it is true. Oh, but how I hate this life! How I shudder when I think that I am the child of that man! How his iniquities cause the blush of shame to continually surge into my face;" and the speaker's voice trembled, and tears came into the beautiful eyes.

"Why do you not leave him?"

"Because I dare not. Where could I go? And then, though I do not love him, he is my parent, and no matter how low he may have fallen, it is my duty to remain beside him."

He was struck with the sincerity of the girl's words. It was singular that she, living amid a life of crime, should retain all her innocence, and the qualities of a Christian heart. He remarked that she spoke as fluently and with as much culture as a New York belle.

"And you have come to save me?" he asked.

"Yes, and you must lose no time in leaving this place."

"Where is your father?"

"In the room below, with a few of his men."

"Miss, I shall not leave this house until I recover my money."

"Oh, do not think of that. I think of naught but your life. Come! follow me. There is a bridle-path through the bushes that will lead you to the roadway. Once there, you are safe."

Greyling was determined to recover his money, so he gave no attention to the girl's remarks, but moved toward the door, and cautiously made his way to the floor below. The girl followed, urging him to give no thought to the money, but he was firm in his purpose.

The light of the lamp showed him the door leading into the room. First possessing himself of a loaded rifle which stood in the hall, he opened the door and entered.

Three men, in addition to Gentleman Jack, were sitting in the room.

They sprang up and glanced at him threateningly, and he returned the glance in the same spirit.

"I demand my money," Greyling said.

"You fool!" hissed Gentleman Jack; and he rushed at Greyling.

The young man raised the rifle and covered Gentleman Jack.

The outlaw paused. His followers gazed on sullenly, not daring to draw a weapon while the young man held the rifle in their direction.

"Give me my wallet!" he cried.

With a bitter curse, Gentleman Jack drew the wallet from his breast and threw it at the young man's feet.

The latter, for the moment, forgot his caution, for he lowered the rifle and stooped down and grasped the wallet, and as he arose Gentleman Jack aimed a fearful blow at his neck.

Greyling adroitly moved aside, and the blow only fell lightly on his shoulder.

"Ha!" he cried. "You would be treacherous," and the outlaw, who had all but lost his equilibrium, received a blow between the eyes before he could recover himself.

He fell backward to the floor, and his followers, overcoming their fear, rushed at Greyling.

He shoved the wallet into his pocket, and, raising the rifle to his shoulder, he took aim at the foremost man, and fired. The man fell, mortally wounded, and the other two paused.

Taking advantage of this, Greyling dropped his weapon and made for the door.

The outlaw's daughter, hidden by the door, had witnessed all, and, as Greyling rushed into the hall, she exclaimed:

"Quick! There are more outlaws in the house, and if you remain here another instant you will be captured. Follow me," and, clutching his arm, she led him to a door at the end of the hall. She opened it, and, followed by Greyling, stepped out into the woods.

Evidently the girl's words were true, and the house was full of outlaws, for he heard numerous voices, among them Gentleman Jack's, and then the rush of many feet; so, slamming the door to, he cried to the girl:

"You must come with me. These men will punish you for releasing me."

"I will go with you," she replied. "I would not dare remain after what has occurred."

So deep was the darkness that the young man could not perceive his companion, so, allowing her to retain hold of his arm, he followed where she led him.

The next instant he found himself amid bushes, tantalizing branches sticking in his face and hands—led on by his fair friend.

"They are following us," he murmured, as the bushes behind him cracked and snapped.

Nearer and nearer his pursuers were approaching, and they seemed within a few feet of him when his companion exclaimed:

"Here is the road!"

Was he safe now? he asked himself, as he stepped upon a broad, even road. Would Gentleman Jack and his band follow him there?

"Now we will have no trouble in avoiding our enemies," the girl said.

"Won't you, though!" exclaimed a voice from the path they had issued from, and in an instant Gentleman Jack and his men confronted them.

"Oh, father," cried the beautiful girl, "spare this man!"

"Never!" replied the outlaw, and drawing a bowie-knife from his belt he rushed at Greyling.

In another second of time the knife would have been buried in the young man's body, but ere the outlaw could accomplish his fatal design there was the report of a rifle, and Gentleman Jack fell back with a bullet in his lungs.

There was the tramping of many feet, the sound of voices, and from the other side of the road appeared a body of men wearing the uniform of the United States Army, and, before the outlaws could recover from their surprise, they were prisoners.

Greyling was amazed at the turn affairs had taken, and he had not yet regained his composure when the commander of the soldiers, a handsome man, his features clouded with a settled sadness, laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"We arrived at the right moment, didn't we?" he said to Greyling.

"You did," responded the young man gratefully. "You saved my life. Can I have the honor of knowing the name of my preserver?"

"I am Colonel Williston, and you——"

"I am Frank Greyling, of New York."

"Well, Mr. Greyling," said Colonel Williston, "for the past week I have been searching for an outlaw styling himself Gentleman Jack——"

"This is the man," interrupted Greyling, pointing to where the outlaw lay upon the ground writhing in dire agony.

A look of pleasure swept over the colonel's face, and he glanced at the fallen man. No sooner did he look than his face became as pale as death.

"Great Heaven!" he cried. "Edward Prentice!"

At the sound of that name Gentleman Jack raised his head and glanced around.

"Who calls me Edward Prentice?" he cried.

"I do!" replied the colonel, rushing to him and dropping on his knees beside him. "Wretch, where is my daughter?—the child that you stole from me so long ago?"

Death had nearly claimed the outlaw's soul, and at the colonel's words he shuddered. The blood rushed up from his lungs, but he succeeded in speaking.

"Forgive me!" he pleaded piteously. "Forgive me! There is your child."

The dying outlaw raised himself and pointed to the beautiful girl who had befriended Greyling.

She had witnessed the exciting proceedings in amazed silence, but at Gentleman Jack's words she rushed to his side, crying:

"Is it true? Am I not your child?"

"No, you are not my child!" he replied. "This soldier is your father"—pointing to Williston.

"My daughter!" the colonel joyfully cried, and, springing to his feet, he embraced the girl.

Greyling stood by, witnessing this dramatic episode in silence.

"I am dying," cried the outlaw. "I have at times thought of my wickedness, and determined to repent, and now, as my life-blood is gradually flowing away, remorse clutches at my heart, and I think with horror of my lawless career. Twenty years ago"—and the man appeared to be addressing Greyling—"I was a well-to-do man, residing in New York. I fell in love with a beautiful young woman. I loved and lost! Leonie Elwin preferred the love of Charles Williston to mine, and he won her.

"They were married, but my hatred for the man who had won the girl I loved became so intense that I determined to have revenge. I waited for years, but I obtained it at last. When their child was born, and I observed how Williston idolized it, I saw a way of rending his heart with anguish, and when the child—the beautiful girl before me—was a year old, I stole her from her parents and concealed her. Somehow they learned that I was the kidnaper, and I was hounded by the officers of the law, and at last it was necessary for me to fly to the West with the child, where I have since remained, leading a life of crime.

"All these years I have cared for the girl. I taught her, and as she grew up I had the consolation of seeing in her the image of my lost love."

The outlaw paused.

Colonel Williston and his daughter were still clutched in each other's arms.

"Williston!" cried the dying outlaw, "forgive me for the wrongs I have done you?"

"Edward Prentice," said the colonel, "it is difficult for any forgiving spirit to enter my heart when I think how you destroyed my happiness. When you stole my child my wife died, actually of a broken heart. But despite all this I pity you, and this meeting with my daughter after so many years' separation induces me to say 'I forgive you.'"

"Thank God!" cried the outlaw, and the next moment he expired.

* * * * * * *

Our story has quite a romantic sequel. Colonel Williston's daughter was named Leonie, after her mother, and Frank Greyling formed an attachment for her that soon grew into passionate love, and as Leonie's feelings toward him were of a similar nature, it was not long before they were married.

We will not dwell on minor details, save to say that Mr. Raynor, the banker, was so grateful to Greyling for wresting his money from the outlaws that he gave the young man a splendid position that enabled him to live in a luxurious manner with his beautiful wife.

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